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To
Arthur Hill
with very kind regards.
from the Author.

Sep. 1899.

LEAVES FROM A GAME BOOK

Only 250 *Copies of this Book will be issued.*

Yours very truly
A. L.

SNXIII/C

LEAVES FROM A GAME BOOK

BY

AUGUSTUS GRIMBLE

AUTHOR OF

"DEERSTALKING," "SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING," "HIGHLAND SPORT,"
"THE DEER FORESTS OF SCOTLAND"

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PREFACE.

THESE pages are dedicated to the happy memories of an unbroken series of twenty successive seasons of sport, given to me with no niggard hands by numerous good friends. To my many kind hosts and hostesses, with whom I have passed so many happy days of friendship and jollity, I wish long life, good health, great luck, grand sport.

A. G.

UNION CLUB,
BRIGHTON.
July, 1898.

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LEAVES FROM A GAME BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

The close of the shooting season 1898 finds me slowly recovering from a spiteful attack of influenza, followed by "complications"; and thus it has come to pass that, while consoling myself with the thought that shooting had ended ere the microbe so successfully stalked me, I have sought further relief from the monotony of enforced inactivity in the reperusal of the pages of my game book, and in jotting down the reminiscences recalled thereby. Right well I know it is idle to expect the contents of these pages can possibly give to others the same amusement they have offered to me, but nevertheless I yet dare hope my readers may find matter sufficiently interesting to while away an idle hour.

For many years past I have kept a game book with considerable exactness, and though the starting point on

the 23rd December, 1853, was nothing better than a red glazed tradesman's book, it has by degrees developed into a somewhat portly volume. On the date above mentioned it is recorded, in schoolboy writing, that "Old Shorter (the head keeper) took me ferreting—shot seven rabbits—missed eight;" this great event taking place in Mountfield Park, Sussex, I then being not quite thirteen years old. But, nevertheless, putting aside the "potting" of sundry thrushes, fieldfares, &c., this was the very first start of my shooting life.

To come, however, to more recent periods, my game book certifies that in the twenty-one seasons commencing from 12th August, 1877, and ending 1st February, 1898, I have been present at the death of 76,577 head of game, made up as follows:—

Red stags (chiefly to own rifle) .	107
Fallow bucks	11
Roe bucks	4
Ptarmigan	89
Carried forward . .	211

Brought forward . .	211
Grouse	9,394
Black-game (mostly old cocks) . .	983
Partridges	10,394
Pheasants	33,710
Hares	3,340
Snipe (chiefly to own gun) . .	1,079
Duck, widgeon, teal, and golden plover (chiefly to own gun) . . .	485
Woodcock	359
Various (jays, wood pigeons, &c.) .	647
Salmon and grilse (mostly to own rod)	601
Rabbits	15,374
	76,577

With regard to roe bucks, ptarmigan, black-game, and woodcock, these numbers could be very largely added to by going back a further ten years, during which decade I shot every season on the Lochnell shootings, near Oban, which were then rented as a whole by my good friend the late James Virtue. Extending over some 55,000 acres, which included some 12,000 acres of cover, it

formed a magnificent stretch of well-stocked ground, on which the black-game and woodcock shooting was something quite out of the common. At the end of Mr. Virtue's lease this ground was broken up into five or six different shootings, which naturally largely reduced the head of game. My "bag," however, has only been given to show one has had a fair chance of seeing a good deal of all sorts of sport, for in point of numbers it is not extraordinary, and my readers must not think I wish to infer that the mere fact of helping to put into the larder a great lot of "stuff" can of itself make a good sportsman; for it would be easy to mention the names of scores of good fellows who assist each season in the killing of many thousand head of game, chiefly pheasants, to whom—as I construe the word—it would be a misnomer to apply the word sportsman, for "shooters" or "gunners" would describe them more accurately.

A sportsman, as I read the term, is one—no matter his rank or calling—who has a thoroughly close acquaintance with the natural history, habits, haunts and wily ways

of every sort of game; one whose eyes and ears are so educated by experience as to intuitively and instantly recognise the likeliest places in which each particular species of the game he is in search of is most probably to be found. This does not read very difficult, but yet how few of the present day shooters devote time or trouble to acquire this art. Watch an educated sportsman left with two "duffers," let us suppose during a day's partridge driving, to choose their stands for themselves. Thrown on their own resources, the "duffers" will be nearly certain to take up positions over which the natural flight of the birds does not lie; while if there are at intervals clumps of two or three high trees side by side in the hedge that is about to be lined, then each tyro will usually place himself directly in front of one of these patches of timber, and of course birds are not likely to come over tall trees when they can pop across a low hedge. Regard now the man who knows the habits of the driven partridge (I am speaking of those birds that have not been *over* driven), and before taking up his position he will turn to survey the country behind him and towards which the birds are going

to be forced. If to his right rear nothing but fallows are to be seen, while behind him on his left a field of roots is visible, then he will stand as much to the left as he fairly can, for he will know that birds will be more likely to make for the cover of the root field, if the day be dry, than for the bare shelter of the fallow; but given a wet day, then he will exactly reverse his proceedings. Having seen all this at a glance, he will then place himself as far back as the height of the hedge will allow, and directly half-way between two clumps of high trees, for he will be equally well aware that birds usually come over a hedge at the lowest place. Even in those countries where the birds are put over belts of fir trees, the man with an educated eye will do better and get easier and more frequent shots than the "duffer," for in such a country he will elect to stand behind some place where a short tree or two lowers the outline of the belt at one particular spot, through which gap it is nearly certain birds driven for the first time are pretty sure to come. Once again, turn a good man and a tyro into a fifty-acre turnip field, without dogs or beaters, and behold, the former will find

birds quicker and oftener than the latter, for parts of the field will probably be slightly undulating, and it will be to the sun-lying edges of these little slopes that the old hand will first turn his attention, especially so if the roots are not very thick at these spots, for right well he knows birds like sunny banks with moderate cover in preference to high-growing shelter with a northern aspect.

I have even seen a keen "duffer" proudly proclaim himself as such in supposing he has done a mighty fine performance by walking through a thigh-high field of swedes after several hours of heavy rain and towards which no birds had been pressed. Why, he might as well have asked his laundress to let him look for birds in her washing tub.

These matters read but as trifles; but yet so important are they, that he who can put them into practice will surely get two good shots for the usually difficult one of the inexperienced hand.

Again, at the end of a tramp one December day over a marsh, three of us found ourselves with a nice bag of duck, widgeon, teal and snipe—only some of

these latter birds having fallen to a duffer's share, who, as it happened, was quite a good shot. Exclaimed he at the end of the day, "Well, I never saw such wonderful luck as you two had with the ducks, for wherever you went, up they got to you." Our friend did not for a moment realise that what he called "our luck" was but the reward reaped by eyes educated to "spotting" every likely place, and that his own bad luck had resulted solely from his inability to do the same, and approach the likely places as much unseen as possible and directly up-wind.

Many anglers are equally careless and correspondingly unsuccessful fishermen from being too lazy or too proud to learn the Spey cast; they have started their fishing career on a river with open banks, where the overhead cast could be used on every part, and then when their time eventually comes to fish some river where this cast cannot be brought into play, they are totally defeated and get no sport; and in my opinion no one can be called a good angler who cannot use from either shoulder both sorts of casts.

For lack of a better word, the term "duffer" has been employed to describe the untrained sportsman; but the expression has been resorted to more in sorrow than in anger or contempt, for the bulk of the genus duffer are real good fellows, and I have had my fling at them solely in the hope of rousing some of the present-day shooters—as distinguished from sportsmen—to acquire a fuller perception and appreciation of the delights rewarding the man who compels success alike by his superior knowledge of every habit and trick of each sort of game he follows, and by his ability to bring to bear every known manœuvre to outwit whatever species he is pursuing.

As to the really dangerous gunner, in my humble opinion there is usually far too much forbearance shewn him, and to my mind it is a mistake to overlook dangerous shooting. Far better for all concerned that the dangerous man should be politely but very plainly told of his misdeeds. Many years ago, a guest at a shooting party located on the borders of Salisbury Plain proved himself so exceedingly dangerous that, at the end of the day,

the rest of the guests went in a body to their host, and told him they would not again take the field with this reckless man. Now, the culprit was a foreigner of distinction, and his host was at his wits' end to know how to make matters go pleasantly for all concerned, until at last he hit on a happy idea, and, calling to his dangerous friend across the breakfast table, he announced that for him he had that day reserved the post of honour, and that he was to go bustard shooting on Salisbury Plain; but he did not add that these birds were extinct, and none had been seen for many years. Delighted at the honour conferred on him and the envious expressions of his fellow-guests at his good luck, off went the stranger in charge of a keeper duly primed as to his part of the business.

At the end of the day, when the party again all met, the bustard stalker rushed up to his host, and, while thanking him very warmly for his kindness, announced as a matter-of-course sort of event that he had killed, not one, but two bustards!

I am credibly told this story is a fact, and that

these two birds were the last of the species ever seen on Salisbury Plain. Be that as it may, it is not everyone who has a shoot bordering on Stonehenge; so perhaps some more inventive brain than mine may be able to devise other methods of getting rid of a dangerous shot and yet withal pleasing him greatly!

With regard to the great bustard, I learn from my friend Mr. Henry Thornhill that the last one seen on the East Coast of England was trapped at Caversham, in Suffolk, on the property of Mr. H. S. Waddington, and was afterwards sold at the Riddlesworth sale for forty-eight guineas.

CHAPTER II.

1887.

Commencing, then, with the year 1887, I found myself a shareholder in a joint-stock shooting company, having only once before been a partner in a similar concern; and this investment, like the first, proved a really good one, for, in proportion to the money sunk, it yielded splendid dividends in the shape of excellent sport, merry companions, and the making of some lasting friendships. Major James Ramsay was our chairman and managing director, and right well he knew his business. John Baird of Knoydart, Francis Tress Barry (the present member for Windsor) and I made up the shareholders. We "struck oil" on the Carim shootings in Perthshire, a property belonging to that good landlord, Captain Home Drummond Murray of Abercairney.

The lodge, some four miles from Blackford Station, was prettily placed on the slope of the Ochill Hills, and

consequently not so inaccessible as some of the more northern shooting-boxes; and though our house had no pretensions to external beauty, its solid walls contained a most comfortable interior.

These shootings extended over an area of some 12,000 acres, of which 6,000 was moor, the remainder being bog, grass, and farmed land. The rent was then £600, and as in those days the Ground Game Act was not in existence, both brown hares and rabbits were plentiful, for of the former we got upwards of a thousand in the season.

During my first stay at Carim of three weeks the total bag was—

1,123 grouse.
29 black-cocks.
28 partridges.
279 snipe.
23 ducks.
315 hares.
732 rabbits.
11 various.

Or a total of 2,540 head. As it was a bad partridge

year, we gave them a jubilee; but in any fairly good season from three to four hundred brace could be got. The snipe marsh was then a great feature of this ground, and passengers by the trains going north will find their route runs on the eastern edge of it, while passing between the stations of Greenloaning and Blackford. Here in those days the snipe bred freely, and as many as forty-five couple have been got on it by one gun in a single day.

On the 11th of August we were all to have met at Carim Lodge, but at the last minute a wire came from Baird saying he could not be with us till a few days later; therefore we agreed to keep the best grouse beat for his start, while we worked the rest of the moor in the meantime. It was the 17th before our missing partner turned up, and the following day we were all delighted when he returned home with one hundred and twelve brace to his own gun. This fine bag, together with a rather clever performance on the part of a retriever of Barry's, was the only noteworthy event occurring during our happy time at Carim.

It chanced that in the spring the keeper had caught a fox cub, which he kept in the stable yard chained to an extempore kennel made out of an old cask, and with a little carpentering, felt and pitch, no better or warmer one can be desired. One morning while we were at Carim it was found that the fox was missing, while it could be seen that he had drawn the staple of his chain and gone off with it and the collar attached to him. It was certain that with these ornaments he could not go very far, so taking Barry's retriever to the empty cask, and pointing out the deserted abode, the keeper sent the dog in pursuit, while, as fox and dog were good friends and accustomed to play together, there was no fear of Reynard coming to grief. After a short absence the dog came back with his tail aloft, and proudly holding one end of the chain in his mouth, led the fugitive to the door of the keeper's cottage.

As soon as sport began to slacken at Carim, Baird asked us all to visit him at Knoydart; unluckily for Barry, he had to go south, so Ramsay and I started

for Oban to meet our host's large paddle-wheel yacht, *The Griffen.* We found her lying in Kerrera Sound, and six o'clock that evening saw us steaming full speed ahead past Dunollie Castle, straight up the Sound of Mull.

As dusk came on, we went below to an early dinner, so as to get a steady table before meeting the big roll of the Atlantic coming round Ardnamurchan Point—a real bad place to weather during a gale from the west, for circling round that rocky promontory the tides raced with all the impetuous force of a large and swollen Highland river. Thus, when winds and currents met, this could at times be a very rough and even dangerous bit of sea.

On this particular night all went well, and as we came on deck to smoke our pipes, *The Griffen* rose and fell to the big rollers in a gentle and friendly manner, the paddles were beating the water with quick thuds, while in the dusk the white seething foam of our track was visible a long way astern. As the stars shone out, the surrounding hills appeared to shut us in on all sides, and the Captain on joining us invited each to

guess where the true outlet was, when having both made failures we retired to our berths, laughing at our discomfiture.

The next morning found *The Griffen* at anchor in Loch Nevis, just off Inverie House, a large comfortable-looking mansion. The route by which we had come is really the only pleasant one to Knoydart; true it is that a pony track crosses the hills from the side of Loch Ness to the head of Loch Hourn, but it could only be travelled with impedimenta of the collar and tooth-brush order; weather permitting, there was also an alternative route, and one could get put ashore by dropping into a row-boat coming out of Loch Nevis to meet the steamer passing up the Sound of Sleat. After breakfast we landed, to be welcomed by our host and another guest, Colonel Albert Williams, R.H.A., and the remainder of that day we passed rod in hand, the Colonel and I going to Loch Dhulochan, while the other two made for the Inverie River—proceedings which resulted in a great show of sea trout in the evening, together with a twenty-two-pound salmon caught in the

loch by the Colonel with a single-handed trout rod and small sea trout fly. During dinner it was settled that on the morrow two parties of two each should stalk and that Ramsay * should fish, for, as he was not in the best of health, he wished to keep clear of the hard exercise involved in climbing the steep and stony hills of Knoydart.

No sooner, however, were these plans made than they were doomed to be upset, by the butler notifying to his master that the head forester was in the pantry and wished him to know that he had just "got word" that the Morar poachers had arranged to come next night to net a distant river on the Knoydart property, falling into the head of Loch Nevis.

Our host promptly decided we would be in front of them, and orders were given to have boat, nets and spears ready for an early start on the morrow.

* This makes a party of five, and it is correct, for there was one more guest, a right good fellow, but whose name I cannot recall to mind, having by some means left it out of my game book. Therefore, as it is awkward talking about a nameless guest, I have taken the liberty of christening this gentleman after Mr. Scrope's well-known companion, and for the future he will appear as "Lightfoot."

The day broke gloriously, and we were soon afloat, though five of us, with a quartette of gillies, made a heavy load, in spite of the four long oars at which we all took a willing turn during this pull of twelve miles. At length the journey came to an end, so, while everything was being made secure and the nets, etc., landed, putting my rod together, I went off up stream at best pace, in hopes of getting some sport before the netting party caught me up.

The whole stream did not extend to more than three miles, but there were plenty of nice deep pools, which, though all my own to flog for fully an hour, yet failed to give so much as a rise or even the sight of a fish. Then, as the netters appeared, I joined them, vowing boldly there was not a fish in the stream.

Our four gillies were soon waist deep in water, working the net cannily round the edges of a deep pool. As the operation neared completion, our host took a spear, while telling us to do likewise; then following him, we were shortly all standing nearly shoulder to shoulder in the shallow rush of water

above the pool, hardly being in position before cries came from the gillies, telling us they could feel fish striking the net. Immediately afterwards there were plenty of fish of all sizes trying to dash past us up the shallow, or bolting under banks and boulders to hide themselves as they caught sight of us. Right and left the spears were plied, sometimes victoriously, but oftener missing, while with a sharp rattle the metal prongs dashed against the stones. Amid shouts of "There he goes!" more than one of us fell souse into the water, or could be seen standing aghast, with arms tingling from finger-tips upwards at the shock caused by a bad stroke, having violently speared a rock instead of a fish. As by degrees the net was worked round to the shelving side of the river, quitting our places we ran forward to see the contents, when, behold! from the pool I had vowed was empty, out there came ten good salmon of from nine to sixteen pounds, together with some thirty-five sea trout.

In a similar manner other pools were visited, and by the time the best of them had been netted, twenty-eight

salmon and grilse, with about a hundred sea trout, had to be carried back to the boat. The row home in the dusk wound up a real good day of fun, doubtlessly enhanced by the knowledge of having outwitted the poachers and by picturing to ourselves what would be their disgust when later on they made their long journey in the darkness, only to find themselves forestalled.

These scringing and splash-net poachers are the pests of the West Coast of Scotland, and there is hardly a village or town between Oban and the extreme north but what has its gang or gangs of these pirates. Dry weather is their great opportunity, for as soon as rivers and streams run too low to permit the ascent of salmon and sea trout, these fish congregate in large numbers in the estuaries, where they become an easy and profitable prey to the scringe-net of the poacher. Strange to relate, Scotch gamekeepers, unless ordered and incited thereto by their masters, rarely bother their heads about fish preserving, and for this reason numerous are the hauls made by the poachers in undisturbed tranquility. In this respect both owners and renters of fishings, even

though they be keen anglers, are usually also very careless; and thus it comes to pass, when the drought ends and the long looked for flood comes, which should stock the rivers, numbers of gentlemen are to be heard wasting much breath in wondering why no fish have ascended their streams! In cases where the estuaries are not very deep or very wide, the fish can easily be protected by sinking objects in which the net is bound to become entangled. A good big stone wrapped round with thorn bushes, and tied up with barbed wire, will play delightful havoc with any net; or an empty three-dozen champagne case, filled with stones and externally "porcupined" with long strong nails, and dropped into the water at intervals, is an easy way of protecting an estuary, for this preserver can be deposited exactly where it is desired to put it. In the first place the case can be laid empty in the stern of a coble, then the stones can be added, the lid fastened down, and the projecting nails driven in, when the boat can be pulled to the spot it is desired to protect, and a good shove will deposit this salmon life protector in its position, while one man can easily put down a lot of these

obstacles in a day, and no net will move them or come clear without being seriously damaged. In this manner I successfully defeated the raids of several gangs of habitual scringers of the mouth of a small sea trout stream running through a shooting I once had near Oban, much to my own gain in sport and greatly to the damage of their nets. This town is undoubtedly the headquarters of the poaching fraternity, and in the autumn, long after the salmon nets have been compelled by law to cease work on all the adjacent rivers, there may yet be seen exposed for sale on the fishmongers' slabs most splendid salmon freshly netted from the sea. In a letter to the *Scotsman* and the *Oban Times*, to which I signed my name, I taxed the Oban fishmongers with selling poached fish, and challenged them to deny the accusation, which, however, not one of them did, and, what was more extraordinary, neither did any of the local or district fishery inspectors take any notice or in any way interfere. Therefore small wonder the fish poacher thrives on the West Coast!

An amusing sequel to a fish-poaching expedition

happened to my old friend Captain G. W. Hunt, when he rented the Glendrynoch shootings in Skye. In some mysterious way his head keeper, Mackintosh, learnt there was to be a raid made on the estuary of one of the Glendrynoch streams falling into the West Coast of the island, and promptly informing his master, it was instantly resolved to try and effect a capture; accordingly, about midnight Hunt started with two keepers across country, so as to reach the estuary well before dawn. Just previous to setting out, Mrs. Hunt asked her husband if he were armed, for it was a matter of common talk that the rascals they were about to try and arrest were a rough and lawless lot. This enquiry drew a grim chuckle from the Captain, and an assurance that, should there be blows, he did not doubt but what the stout oak stick he carried would be ample protection; then, to make Mrs. Hunt more at ease, he picked off a table a very large revolver with a long nickel-plated barrel—a formidable weapon of large bore, and a regular "man stopper" if ever there was one—and thrusting it in his pocket, he departed with a

laughing assertion that the mere sight of it would scare a whole army of poachers.

A few hours' walking brought the three into their places, and after a short wait they saw by the light of the moon a boat come round the promontory and pull up the estuary towards them. The four strong men at the oars soon brought the little craft opposite the hidden watchers, when two of the crew were put ashore with one end of the net rope, while the other couple rowed off at best speed to form a large semi-circle and bring the net to land again some distance above. The moment the boat left the shore, Hunt told his two men to creep in as near as they could, and then to pounce on the two shore men the instant the boat completed the shoot of the net and touched land again. Then, when a few minutes later the boat was beached, Hunt also sprang from his lair in the heather and boldly jumped on board, while he could see that his men had laid their two rascals by the heels; springing past the two astonished men, Hunt quietly seated himself in the stern, and telling them they were trapped, he ordered

them to row gently back over the course they had come, so that he might pick up and of course capture both net and fish ! Rather a rash order for one man to give to two big, powerful fellows, who, however, seeing that their companions were already caught, and perhaps somewhat taken aback at the unconcerned coolness of their captor, proceeded to obey sullenly ; when, however, they had pulled a short distance, Hunt saw the bow oar give the stroke a significant dig in the ribs, which sign was instantly followed by both men reversing their hands and clearly preparing to club oars and knock their captor senseless, or push him into the sea. Then Hunt's hand flew to his breast-pocket, and the long shining barrel of the revolver flashed in the moonlight as he levelled it straight in the face of the nearest ruffian, while in stern business-like tones he was told that the smallest movement indicative of violence would for certain bring a bullet crashing through his head. Completely overawed by the Captain's resolute bearing, the two men in sulky silence finished their uncongenial task, and as they reached the shore, they were promptly

seized and bound and laid by their companions. Thus Hunt and his two men had collared four poachers, and now that they had time to look them over, Mackintosh was able to identify them all by name and knew where each one hailed from, so therefore they were released and told to foot it. Their boat and net were kept, and the latter destroyed within a few hours, while in due course the quartette of poachers were summoned before the local beak, or "Fiscal," I think he was called. When the day of trial arrived, they at once pleaded guilty, but before sentence was passed, the local limb of the law they had employed for their defence asked permission to say a few words in mitigation of punishment. Commencing then by stating that his clients all had starving families to provide for (they always do have under similar circumstances), he proceeded to lay great stress on the fact of Captain Hunt having gone out armed with a murderous weapon, fully prepared to take the lives of these poor men had they offered the least resistance, and so strongly and so hotly was this matter put, that "The Fiscal," whose sympathies

were with the poachers, turned to Hunt and inquired in severe tones, "Is it true, Captain, that you had a big revolver with you that night?"—to which query came the answer, "Yes, I had; and I have it now with me in Court, in exactly the same state in which it was then." "Then, Captain Hunt," replied the Fiscal, "I will ask you to produce it, but pray be very careful how you handle a loaded pistol."

On hearing this, Hunt pulled from his pocket the terrible weapon and carefully pointed it to the ceiling, while the whole of the crowded court craned their necks aloft to gaze at it, and were evidently much struck by the size; then, just as suppressed talk began to make itself heard, Hunt pulled the trigger, when, amidst roars of laughter, the barrel fell in two pieces at right angles to the stock and a very pretty fan was seen to hold them together, the whole thing being a Parisian conceit. Needless to say, Hunt won his case, and the poachers were rather heavily fined, and what was still better, they came in for such an amount of chaff that

they soon left Skye to seek fresh fields of operation on the mainland.

At the dinner-table that evening—where, by the way, we guests first made the acquaintance of a "tappit hen," a bottle of claret holding about five ordinary ones—it was settled afresh that the arrangements previously made should hold good, Lightfoot and myself being told off to go to the most distant beat in the forest. Six o'clock next morning saw us both in the saddle, a fine specimen of West Coast manhood leading the way, and, though carrying both our rifles, he took us at a good trot along a well-made track. Our guide, moreover, was adorned with a profusion of long, curling, dark-red hair, which presented a somewhat comical appearance as it flopped up and down at each footfall of his pony. Conversation with him was out of the question, as he had "no much English," and during all that day "Goot morning, gentlemen," "Goot evening, gentlemen," was the longest speech he made us.

It was a perfect stalking day, the light clear, with the clouds high overhead moving gently to a steady

breeze coming from the very best airt. After a pleasant ride of some ten miles, we found the Knoydart peninsula had been crossed, and that we were making a descent on to the side of Loch Hourn, which, some two thousand feet below us, looked like a serpentine streak of freshly-cleaned silver. Across the loch Ben Screel reared his three thousand feet of stony height almost sheer from the water-side. This is perhaps the stoniest hill in all Scotland, for, excepting a few stunted birch-trees fringing the base, there is from sea to summit neither heather nor grass to break the grey monotone of millions and millions of stones of every shape and size. A thin streak of smoke was coming from the lonely cottage of the forester living at the head of Loch Hourn, the only sign of life in this wild and desolate-looking country. On arriving here, after being welcomed with a cup of milk, we stabled our ponies while listening—although feeling quite "out of it"—to a long Gaelic confab between our escorts, when it dawned on us that our second stalker could not raise more English than the first one. A fairly good track ran by the seaside to the head of the loch, a

sharp tramp along this making a pleasant change from pony back; then we turned abruptly to the right, to find ourselves face to face with the very steep hillside towering above us; so steep was it that the whole party were reduced to hands and knees ere gaining the top. Once there, the panorama that disclosed itself was of such vast dimensions and so superbly beautiful that for a short time the deer were absolutely forgotten. Facing us lay the whole of the Sound of Sleat and the Isle of Skye, with the saw-shaped peaks of the Cuchullins in the distance; away to the west the Islands of Rum, Eigg, Muck, and Canna dotted the ocean, while further to the south Coll and Tiree appeared in the distance, their rocky extremities apparently curving up and standing clear of the water —sure sign of wet weather; beyond these isles spread the waters of the sunlit Atlantic, offering a view so vast in scope that no canvas could take it in. Infinitely varied in outline and ever changing from grave to gay, as the shadows chased each other from rocky headlands to darken distant islands, the whole effect offered a land and sea scape of such rare beauty that,

though able to feel all the charm, I am quite at a loss to describe it adequately.

Needless to say, our two Highlanders had paid no attention to any matters of this sort, but in lieu thereof they had taken up positions wide apart from each other, while, lying on their backs, they were busily engaged in spying. As the "second" forester happened to be the nearer to us, we squatted beside him, also getting out our glasses to share in the search. Presently there came from the head man a great grunt, and, turning towards him, the sound was emphasized by an outstretched arm terminating in an enormously large pointing forefinger, which certainly had not seen soap that morning. It was clear he had found deer, so putting our glasses on to the spot indicated, we soon made out a small herd of eight stags some two miles distant right in front of us, and on the very edge of the hill we had just come up. Then ensued a whispered, though seemingly excited, talk in Gaelic, which sounded to us as if there was some small difference of opinion as to the best method of making the attack; so we also held a

council of war, only to agree to our mutual satisfaction as to the manner in which we would proceed if we were alone, when, eventually, we were pleased to find our ideas appeared to coincide with those of our guides. Once more we faced the hill we had come up, and descended it to nearly half way (rather a bore after all the trouble we had had in climbing it); then we struck right along the face, the reason for this manœuvre being discovered as we passed a wide gap, through which the deer might have "picked us up," had we not kept below it; and the long-haired one silently pointed to it as a sufficient explanation of the movement. Once past this, we gradually scrambled again towards the summit, while, on nearing it, our stalker halted and again pointed upwards, as, with an expressive look, he drew the rifles from their covers, at the same time signing to us to load. Taking a coin from my pocket, I spun it up and held it out to my companion, who, in a whisper, guessed wrongly, so I was to have first fire, though almost sorry to do so, for it was Lightfoot's very first chance at deer. I whispered, but it is to be feared in a half-hearted tone, "You take it," but meeting with a

resolute shake of the head, the advance was resumed. As we came to the sky-line, dropping to our knees, we crept forward almost three abreast; a head in front of me on my left was the stalker, while on my right crawled Lightfoot. After covering some yards in this way, eight stags became visible, seven of them browsing about a hundred yards below us; the eighth was lying behind a big rock, with nothing but his head showing. As he undoubtedly had the best pair of horns of the lot, after a moment's hesitation I settled to try for a "gallery" shot. As the rifle was laid, a sharp kick on the shin made me turn to find the stalker scowling fearfully, while he pointed and signed as well as he dared, with eyes starting out of his head, to a very easy broadside chance at a beast feeding below. For the life of me I could not help winking at him, while with a grin I again sighted for my first choice. As the report rang out, the stag's head, as if moved by machinery, dropped quietly to the heather, while, as the forester had predicted, the rest of the herd dashed off to the right, and putting in my second barrel too hastily, I struck my beast nearer the

haunch than the heart, a bad example promptly followed by Lightfoot with his first barrel; but whispering to him, "Steady now with your second," even as I spoke the ball sped true, and the next best stag rolled over. Then indeed the two men had much to say to each other, and to us also, only we could not understand them. Lightfoot was patted on the back, and "Goot—ferry goot" sounded in our ears as we all ran down to the deer. We each made for our own, and mine lay exactly as he was when the ball struck him; death must have been really instantaneous, for he was brained, and lay with his fore legs still tucked under him, and beyond the drop of the head he had clearly not moved a muscle. On joining Lightfoot, we found his stag had a bullet in the haunch, another in the stomach, and the final one through the heart, so we had struck him at each shot. Lunch followed the gralloch, after which we had another long spy; but finding nothing, we returned to the scene of our success, where we were made to understand that the deer had to be taken down the hill to the loch side. Between us all four, the carcasses were with much labour hauled down to

the water's edge without damage, and then tramping off to the lonely cottage by the waves, the ponies were saddled, and, making the best of our way home, a little past nine o'clock found us seated at the dinner-table.

The next morning we all went to see our quarry hanging in the larder, when Lightfoot and I had to face a lot of rather severe chaff from Williams about our wild shooting at the beast with the three bullets in him. However, there was nothing to be done except grin and bear it. The day following, however, the Colonel was stalking by himself with the head forester, and sent home a good beast, and when next morning we made the usual trip to the larder, to our great joy we saw this stag had two bullets in his haunches, one in his entrails, and one in his heart! Needless to say that as we saw this sorry sight we were quick to recognise our opportunity for retaliation had come, and, though the Colonel was a good bit our senior, we made the most of it.

The Knoydart deer of those days were not very heavy either in body or horn, but in 1893 the estate was purchased by Mr. E. Salvin Bowlby, of Gilston Park, Herts,

under whose management it would appear the deer have increased both in quantity and quality, as at the present time the usual average kill is about 100 stags, showing a mean weight of 15 stone clean. This property in its earlier days was one of the strongholds of the powerful Macdonnell sept, under whose sway the hills and valleys of Knoydart saw much clannish warfare. At the present time the district is so peaceable and so sparsely populated that the last recorded bloodshed still dates back to 1745, when a sergeant of a party of the King's forces, scouring the district in search of fugitives from Culloden, killed a crying child in front of its mother's eyes, merely to curry favour with his officer, who was annoyed by the sound. The father of the murdered child, vowing vengeance, pursued the party, and having escaped after killing by mistake a prisoner purposely mounted on the officer's horse, he yet stuck to his purpose, and again coming up with the detachment, he shot the officer dead and once more beat a safe retreat.

This district is further remarkable as having been the scene of the wreck of one of the Armada, and

to this day there is a colony of Catholics dwelling in Knoydart with all the well-known characteristics of the Spanish race.

To my mind there is but one drawback to West Coast sport—that is the weather, for once let it break, and then there is no telling how long it may continue to rain. I have on one occasion seen it fine every day for a whole month, but in an experience of many years I have several times known pelting rain to fall every day for four or five weeks in succession, which was only made more provoking by the nights being brightly starlight. Whether this phenomenon can be accounted for on any meteorological and scientific data we never troubled to enquire, though now that I rarely visit the wild West Coast, I often wonder if this matter of wet days with fine nights can have any explanation except pure "cussedness" on the part of the Clerk of the Weather.

The sport of the West Coast is almost endless in its variety, for, setting aside the pursuit of game with the gun, the fishes, porpoises, otters, and the wild birds in the time of their migration are ever inviting the attention

of the sportsman; and on this beautiful coast a small cottage with a boat and man will provide daily excitement at a very small cost. The most plentiful fishes are the codling, whiting, and coal fish or saithe, whose young are called cuddies. The coal fish I soon found to be very partial to a fly dressed on an inch and a half iron covered with a silver body, beginning and ending in a head and tail of red worsted, while two long strips of white swan feather made wings, which concoction, when attached to a couple of lengths of old salmon gut, will beat all the shop flies; and with three of these I hooked simultaneously, and later on landed, helped by a small sharp gaff wielded by a clever boatman, a treble event in the shape of three coal fish of five pounds each.

The sport with whiting as long as it lasts is usually fast and furious, for, during the first two or three days after the arrival of a shoal on the feeding bank, from ten to fifteen dozen may be pulled into the boat in a few hours; then on the third or fourth day the fishing on that particular ground will be almost surely spoilt by the quantities of dog-fish that have gathered together

in pursuit of their favourite food, and on such occasions there will be more of these shark-like gentry hauled up than delicate whiting.

There is one species of dog-fish carrying a long thorn-like spike on its back a little above the tail; this weapon, which varies from one to two inches in length, is so strong and so sharp that a fish of but a few pounds weight can drive it through the leather of a boot, and when bare flesh is pierced, it usually festers and swells to an alarming extent. All such customers should be dealt with summarily before being brought into the boat, and as the head of the thorn-bearer reaches the gunwale, a smart rap should render him harmless. I was often surprised at the numbers of large dog-fish I have landed on the rather fine single gut used for whiting fishing, and can but account for this by recalling to mind that these last-named fish require quick striking, and thus all the dog-fish having been caught for whiting, had been hooked only just inside the lip, and so hindered from reaching and cutting the gut with their teeth.

On still, sunny days great amusement may be had with the water telescope, which is but a small barrel from which both ends have been removed and one replaced with plate glass. If the tub be then fastened to the stern of a boat, with the glass end sunk some few inches under water, the bed of the ocean can be distinctly seen down to a depth of about twenty feet. On either side of the man at the tub should lie a long bamboo pole, one armed with a three-pronged spear, while the other should carry a semi-circular landing net of small mesh, and this paraphernalia being ready, many bright hot days may be happily passed while paddling round the rocky West Coast and searching the depths of its remarkably clear waters. The spear will bring skate, flounders, and at times other fish to the surface, while the net will lift oysters, sea urchins, or other dainties and curiosities of the deep. In this way I speared two heavy fish one season, one a skate of forty-seven pounds (by no means a large one), which was only secured after a hard tussle, while the other was a curious marine monster called the Angler Fish,

though known to the natives as the Fishing Frog. This creature had an enormous mouth, with a protruding under-jaw armed with sharp teeth. The head was out of all proportion to the body, while from the centre of the forehead grew a long tapering tendon, not unlike the thin end of a lady's riding whip, and terminating in a black tuft overhanging the mouth of the "frog." It is said that small fish, taking this tuft for something to eat, are at once snapped up by the open jaws below as they approach to inspect it. We estimated this specimen to scale about thirty pounds, but the enormous head as compared with the small body made it difficult to judge with accuracy, for on that particular day we had not a steelyard with us, and since then I have often regretted not having consigned the hideous thing to the hands of the taxidermist. It did not in the least heed the boat being over it, as for some time I had it kept stationary in the hopes of seeing a fish caught, which to my great regret did not happen, although the beast seemed to be lying open-mouthed with his bait dangling over

it; then the light began to fail, and the spear was used.

With regard to otters, many of them have sea-side residences as well as river ones, and in the middle of the first and last quarters of the moon, when the neap tides occur, their bolt-holes into the sea are left so much uncovered that they have to cross a yard or two of dry ground before reaching the water. On these occasions it is indeed good sport to row on a fine autumn day (for the otters do not come to the sea much before the end of October, just as the salmon begin to get out of condition) from island to island, when, accompanied by a couple of wire-haired Skye terriers, visits can be paid to every holt. The dogs should be put into some holt well above the one opening into the sea, while it is not necessary to spend much time at each, for if Mr. Otter is at home the dogs will tell it at once. The very moment the dogs enter the holt the hunter must stand ready prepared for a snap shot, and as he is rarely more than twenty yards from his quarry, but very few should escape. For

this work I used No. 3 shot, and in one season bagged sixteen otters.

Now as to the seals, I must confess they fairly beat me, for, from being a good deal "looked after," they seldom rested on the shore of the mainland, preferring the greater security of the points of many small islands; while, as they can see, hear and wind one better than any deer, it was nearly impossible to stalk them, and thus I never got but two, and those as much by good luck as by skill, for they were the results of snap shots made at about a hundred yards. On each occasion the ·450 Express bullet literally split their heads asunder, killing them stone dead, and enabling us to row up in time to get the spear into their bodies before they sank. It must be stated that these two shots were the only "bullseyes" made in many essays, but those who have tried it will confirm me in saying a seal's head is not a large mark when bobbing about on the sea a hundred yards away; likewise, it must not be overlooked that the boat is also ever moving, while the shot has to be taken from the shoulder.

As for the porpoises, at times one may go a long time without seeing one, and then for several days in succession vast shoals appear, on which occasions they paid so little heed to our small boat, when anchored for whiting fishing, that I have struck them with the oar as they rose close to us; also, when these thousands of porpoises were rolling about on all sides of us, I took the opportunity of snapping 12-bore bullets at them from an old cylinder gun, but finding they could not be killed stone dead, I soon gave up the attempt. The natives of the West Coast at times endeavoured to use the harpoon, but their weapons were of such a rude character that, even when apparently fairly struck, the porpoise nearly always wrenched himself free; and though I witnessed some good runs with the harpoon, not one actual capture can be recorded. With a well-made harpoon there cannot be a doubt that many porpoises could be killed; likewise, I think they might be made to afford splendid sport if an attempt were made to hook them with a spinning herring; with such a lure at the end of some hundreds of yards of stout line wound on

to a big reel, fixed in the stern of the boat, there would be considerable excitement as the fish took the bait. That they would seize on such a lure I feel certain, as the herring, with the sprat, is their principal food; and the next time I visit the wild West Coast for any length of time my kit will contain the necessary tackle to give this idea a good trial; also there will be a strong, sharp harpoon with barbs that will not draw, and thus in one way or the other I look forward to some lively times with porpoises. Should the spinning herring be a success, then people will not need to go to Florida for uncertain tarpon fishing, for a better sport will have been found on our own sea coasts.

In quitting the subject of the West Coast, I will but urge my readers *never* to let feelings of fatigue or bravado tempt them to sit down in front of a good fire whilst wet through, for unless wet clothes be at once changed for dry ones, sooner or later rheumatism is certain to put in an appearance.

CHAPTER III.

During the seasons of 1878 and 1879 I did but little shooting, and it was not until the 14th September, 1880, that I again found myself hard at it. On that date I was the guest at Mildenhall, in Suffolk, in company with Captain J. Peareth, of my old friend Harry Rae Reid, who entertained us right well at the village inn. On the 15th we three, accompanied by Mr. Gittus, Sir John Rae Reid's tenant, of Worlington, shot over that property on a very wet day, getting eighty-seven partridges and a snipe. Hares we did not shoot, as Mr. Gittus asked us to leave them for coursing, a sport of which he was an ardent follower, and I well recollect how little heed any of us paid to a somewhat insignificant-looking brindled greyhound lady, to whose training her master devoted constant attention. This animal was a relation of the celebrated "Coomassie," who, a few years

previously, had been the winner of the "Waterloo Cup" for two years in succession, when on the occasion of her first victory she was owned and trained by Mr. Gittus.

On the 16th of September we shot over Mr. Godfrey's property at Kennett, a crack shot in the shape of Mr. E. Fryer making up the party, and better practice than he made it has rarely been my lot to witness, for in spite of the day being oppressively close and sultry, we nevertheless took home 220 head, made up of 183 birds, forty hares, and two wood pigeons. In the evening the village of Mildenhall was very gay, the sporting inhabitants making somewhat noisy demonstrations of joy on learning that the Newmarket horse, "Robert the Devil," had won the "Leger" that day.

On the 17th we were a party of five guns on the Heath beat of the Kennett estate, for Mr. Fryer, accompanied by General Wilkinson, joined us; the day resulting in a bag of 170 partridges, twenty-five hares, five rabbits, and two pigeons, or 202 head. As the 18th was wet and thundery, we did not take the field till well after 11 o'clock, our party being reinforced by

the arrival of Stanley Hicks and Charles Farmer; but driven in by a deluge directly after lunch, the bag was but seventy-one partridges. This total of 511 birds were killed entirely by hard work, for we "walked in" the stubbles for ourselves, and as they were numerous and large, with root fields comparatively scarce, we all had plenty of exercise.

My next visit this year was to an old schoolfellow, the late Captain Harry Dacres Evans, R.H.A., who had rented the house and shootings of Glassaugh, near Portsoy, in Banffshire, from Mr. Grant Duff, of Fetteresso. Poor Harry, like many other good fellows, was not superabundantly endowed with the sinews of war, so on retiring from the Service—through the loss of a foot—he wisely enough preferred the comforts of this well-built roomy country house, with its excellent furniture, together with some 5000 acres of low ground shooting, and all for £100 a year, to the doubtful pleasures of a villa at a like rental at Norwood or Brighton, or in "the jungle," as he used to call the suburbs of London.

Arriving at Glassaugh on the 27th of September, I had eighteen days of sport, on five of which Colonel Ainsworth gave me his aid; the bag for that time counting 612 head, or an average of 34 head each day—pretty good sport for the rental. In this total was included 215 partridges, with 82 pheasants, the remainder being made up of hares, snipe, and every other sort of game, including even 5 grouse. My friend kept but one keeper and one gardener, who also looked after a pony and trap. The sale of the rabbits with a little game paid the keeper's wages, together with the hire of a gillie for three months of the shooting season; the sale of the garden produce *plus* the absence of greengrocer's bills also cleared the gardener's wages; so here was my friend with a fairly large, most comfortably furnished house and some 5000 acres of shooting, all for actually £100 a year, and I would suggest to others not overburdened with riches that similar places offer a far more enjoyable, healthy life than a home in the crowded jerry-built villas of the London suburbs. It is the wives and daughters who usually bar the way to such a life, for unless they can find happiness

in country pursuits and be content with a limited amount of society, it must frankly be owned that this sort of existence is but a dull one for them. While I was at Glassaugh my host came out every day in a bath chair pulled by a donkey, and placing himself in front of the fields we were beating, he always contrived to get a few good driven shots, and as long as birds flew to his left he was very certain of killing.

During my stay here I killed, out of a turnip field on the 15th October, a short-horned owl—an unusually early date on which to see one of these wanderers over the whole surface of the globe, for, though they breed here, they seldom arrive before the month of November. I was quite sorry I shot it, for they are harmless birds and splendid mousers, but I had just got a woodcock—probably a home-bred bird—out of the same field, and in a bad dull light I took the owl to be another one.

1881.

My next trip worth mentioning was in August, 1881, when, receiving an invitation from my old friend Henry

Spencer Lucy, of Charlecote Park, Warwick, to spend a month with him in the Highlands at Corrour in Inverness-shire, the 11th of the month saw us arrive at the lodge in the dusk of evening. This was no easy place to get at, for on quitting the limited mail at Struan Station, first there came a ten-mile drive to Kinloch Rannoch; there horses were changed for a further jolt of another twelve miles along the side of Loch Rannoch until "The Barracks" was reached, at a little distance beyond the head of the loch. Here our baggage was put out on to the heather, while close at hand three stout gillies with four ponies were in waiting. One of these ponies bore a deer saddle, another was harnessed to a diminutive two-wheeled cart, while the other two carried riding saddles. After seeing to the packing of our luggage, some in the cart, some slung on the deer saddle, and locking up in a shed any articles that could not be carried forward that day, Lucy mounted his pony "Maggie," a clever, well-shaped mare, and I having done the same by "Jack," we broke into a trot, soon leaving the baggage train behind us. At a turn of the track I caught sight of them, and noticed that

a gillie urged the pack pony in front of him while leading the one in harness, the other two gillies placing themselves meanwhile at either side of the cart ready to lend a shoulder to keep it upright, for as the track was of the roughest and most uneven description, there was a good chance of an upset at any moment. A ride of eight miles brought us to the door of Corrour Lodge just as daylight was failing, and the end of our thirty miles of posting and jolting had come. Now as it had been a splendidly fine day, the fatigues of our twenty-four hours' (from Euston) journey were nothing to speak of, although the same trip at the end of September on a wet windy day, with darkness coming two hours earlier, was quite another matter, and on such occasions I never yet met anyone doing it for the first time but what he had a good deal to tell about it on his arrival at Corrour. This Lodge was then the highest inhabited one in Scotland, as it stood just 1740 feet above sea level. While the exterior was severely plain, the walls were stout and thick, as they had need to be, for wind, snow, and rain each battered against them with double

the fury they brought to bear on lower-lying habitations. The inside was snug enough; big fires of peat and wood burnt in our bedrooms and the dining-room, which was also drawing-room, smoking and gun room rolled into one. A long time after we had finished dinner the rest of the procession arrived, when in due course the butler announced our things were unpacked.

The morning of the "twelfth" was darkly clouded, with a strong south-west wind blowing up heavy showers; not an inviting day, so it was decided to shoot round the house. Then followed an introduction to handsome, good-mannered, old Allan MacCallum, the head forester, and as clever a man with deer as I ever came across. He and his two sons, Donald and "young" Allan, completed the keepering staff. On the way out of the house we halted at the stable door to look at the mass of winter snow still banked up in it, a sight at which Lucy only laughed, while, turning to his butler, he told him to put some champagne in ice for dinner!

By ten o'clock my host was working a pair of well-broken Gordon setters. The light, however, was very

bad, so thus, like most others in similar circumstances, we did not show our best marksmanship, as it is not often that anyone can take a long journey and shoot really well the next day. My idea is that the jolting and shaking of trains, waggonettes, and ponies stirs up the liver too much, and hence the eye is dulled. Be that as it may, we came home with 123 grouse and two white hares, which proved to be nearly a representative bag of each succeeding day.

On the 30th of August we were joined by Charles Williams, a cousin of Lucy's, who stayed with us till the 6th of September, during which time we shot two parties each day, taking it in turns to go out alone. As the 2nd of September was a day of unusual splendour, with a bright hot sun, a cloudless sky, and not a breath of wind, we determined to attack the ptarmigan on the heights above the Lodge, all the party being pretty well "baked" by the time the hill top was reached. We "picked up" eleven grouse in making the ascent, while, as the birds were very wild, we had plenty of other shots, thus getting some little excitement to help us aloft.

Once on our ground, we went at the "tarmigs" with a will, and after securing forty-two of them, with forty-six blue hares, we returned home delighted with a splendid day's sport.

To many sportsmen, the author amongst the number, the pursuit of the ptarmigan is of all others the most fascinating. It is the deerstalking, so to speak, of the shot-gun, taking the shooter on to the same rugged heights the stalker delights in, so that any one who can walk a ptarmigan hill never need fear for his powers if offered a day with deer. These hardy birds are seldom found below an altitude of 2,000 feet, and where the heather and grouse cease to exist, there they thrive.

Ptarmigan! As the word is penned, what pleasant memories are recalled of stony hills in Sutherland, Inverness, Ross, Perth, and Argyle—visions of rocky peaks of dull grey stones splashed with black and yellow crottle; some, flat and standing out at right angles to the hill-side, look like the giant slates of giant school-boys; others, nearly round, seem barely able to keep their places, appearing as if a push would send them crashing

into the valley; rocks of every shape and size; stones by the myriad, from the tiny ones that run away in thousands from the tread, to the great lumps as big as small cottages, round which a careful way has to be picked. Rocks and stones on every side, some shining and sparkling in the sun, others looking black in shadow, while yet over all prevails a cold, dull, melancholy tint of grey. Deep below lies the sombre valley of dark heather, flecked with white streaks of running burns, and dotted here and there with lochs that look like little ponds. There is no visible sign of life, and apparently nothing growing that could support it; and yet on these sterile altitudes ptarmigan not only exist, but thrive and hatch their young. If the day be warm, with birds plentiful, it will not be long ere a sharp, harsh "cr-r-aik" is heard, and again and yet again it sounds; but if the shooter be a novice, look as hard as he may, nothing living will his eyes detect, and turning to ask "Donald" what is making that queer noise, he will get for answer, "It's just the ptarmigan, sir; I've been minding them some time. Do ye no see them sitting right in front?"

Then suddenly a stone appears to turn into a bird, and, lo! a ptarmigan is discovered not forty yards away; then another and another gradually dawn on the uninitiated eye, for as yet they have not changed the mottled stone-coloured plumage for the whiter one which Nature provides for them to match the winter snow, although even in the depth of the Scotch winter the hen retains more of the grey plumage than the cock.

The uninitiated may perhaps think it tame sport to be able to get within range of birds sitting on the ground, and that consequently they must be very easy to kill; but close as they occasionally sit, and prepared as the shooter is, he will yet have to shoot well to get a brace, for of all game birds ptarmigan are quickest off their feet, for their bodies are light, their wings are long and, accustomed to fly against the mountain gales, their flight is extremely rapid. As the sportsman arrives at the altitude where the grouse end and the ptarmigan begin, both birds may at times be flushed simultaneously, and though the former is the heavier, it can then be seen the wings of each are as nearly as possible of the

same length, which will average about 25 inches from the tip of one to the tip of the other. At various times I have cut open the crops of these birds, and have always found the contents to consist of the small oblong evergreen leaves of the crowberry, mixed with a few whole leaves of the blaeberry. Those killed early in the day have had their crops only partially filled, while those shot later in the afternoon have been brimful, even when deep snow was covering the hills, for on steep faces there are always snow slips—miniature avalanches, in fact—which leave their food uncovered, and in such spots, on well-stocked grounds, it is not unusual to spy from fifty to sixty of these wild and beautiful birds assembled in a pack. It is of little or no use going after them on days that are unsettled, the wind being the great enemy to success, for when blowing cold and strong, the birds will be wholly unapproachable, and rising wild, they make long flights across the valleys, to find shelter in places which it would take the pursuer an hour of hard walking to reach.

The next day, the 3rd, broke nearly equally fine,

except that there was a gentle breeze driving white fleecy clouds across the sky, so that their moving shadows rolling over moorland and mountain made a perfect picture of a wild landscape. As breakfast finished, I went to the dining-room window to see more of the view, and as I threw it open to get a better look out, the shadows cleared off stag-famed Ben-y-Vricht, while a flood of brilliant sunshine illumined the whole face of the hill, from the very summit of the rocky, precipitous crest right down to the more gentle slopes of the heather and grass-clad base. So very clearly defined did it seem to stand out that, although four miles away, I turned to the mantel-piece to reach down a spy-glass, remarking, "It is so very bright that in spite of the distance one might perhaps see deer."

"No," said my host, "it is too far, except by any chance there were a hundred of them moving together."

However, paying no heed to the discouraging remark, I knelt down, and resting the glass on the window-sill, brought it to a focus, when, lo and behold! there actually appeared, as if by magic, fully a hundred deer trotting in a mass across a bright green strip of grass. The discovery

was proclaimed with great excitement, whilst every available spy-glass was soon turned on to the herd. My host looked at me, I looked at him, and clearly each guessed the thought that had flashed across us. "Who shall go?" was the question that propounded itself unconsciously to each of us. The matter was soon settled, for my friend, with rare self-denial, met my gaze with a laugh as he said—

"Well, as you found them, you shall go after them;" then making a study of the clouds, he continued, "With this wind you will have to get round them, so I will post myself in a pass on Malaneach to which they may come."

That being settled, Williams, who cared but little for stalking, went off to his grouse beat in Ben Alder Glen. A few minutes later I also was away with Donald McCallum, and having started as if we we about to walk right away from the herd, we eventually began to turn their flank, while a couple of hours' smart walking had brought us to within a mile of the deer, the bulk of them then resting in a large half circle, with the hinds at either end of the crescent and the stags in

the centre. Our glasses now easily showed us there were many very fine beasts amongst them, while one especially seemed to tower above all his fellows. In the position they were then in it was impossible for us to approach nearer until they rose and fed out of sight, for there was a large flat between us and them, the slope on which they were resting commanding every inch of it; therefore we crept to the edge of the flat, getting by this means several hundred yards nearer, and then lying behind a heathery knoll, out came our glasses, and we examined them one by one quite at our leisure. Quickly we made out that the stag we had already noticed as being the largest was undoubtedly a splendid Royal. I at once impressed on Donald that *that* was the deer I *must* shoot at. Never yet had I had a chance at such a one, and get him I must, and would fire at no other, intending even to risk a long shot at him in preference to taking an easier chance at a smaller beast. We counted more than forty stags, and judged there were double that number of hinds—truly a splendid sight.

In about an hour one by one the hinds began to rise to feed, while in a short time the whole herd, following their example, had fed away from us, to vanish over the top of the slope. As two little "staggies," however, would not pass over the sky-line, it became a question as to whether we should attempt to cross the flat in sight of them, for it was clear that, if they would only follow the rest of the herd, we could make a dash for it and reach the top of the ridge while the deer were yet within shot. Making up our minds to have a try, then began one of the longest, most tiring, flattest, and wettest of creeps that I ever undertook. The ground we were about to crawl over was simply a morass on which the hillocks and water-courses offered us the scantiest of shelter. Creeping forward like a couple of big lizards, we were at once wet through from breast to knees, sinking well over our elbows at each movement, and often having to wait motionless for many minutes as those two little despicable stags ceased feeding to gaze about them. When about half way across this flat, to our great joy they disappeared,

and pleasant indeed was the relief of standing up and commencing a run. But we had not quite finished with this couple of nuisances, for one came back. Luckily we saw his horns coming into view, so therefore before his eyes had a chance of seeing us, we were both lying as flat and still as any of the large boulders around us. This sudden move on our part quite did away with any pretence of being dry, for in going down so quickly I lost my balance and fell on my back in a pool of water, where for some time I had to remain, afraid to stir hand or foot. This little "beastie," having unconsciously put us to all possible annoyance, at length departed, a movement to which we responded by quickly gaining the edge of the flat; then after a few seconds' pause we crept up the slope in front of us, whilst my excitement increased as Donald uncased the rifle and passed it to me. After creeping some distance the hinds became visible on either side, being almost within shot. As they were feeding quietly, with no stags visible, it became next door to a certainty these were all on the other side of a small hillock, some sixty feet high and directly

in front of us. Again it became a question as to whether we could creep across the space between us and this hillock without being detected by the hinds; we solved the problem by slipping quietly into a deep burn, offering shelter sufficiently good to allow us to get out of sight and reach the foot of the hill, on the other side of which we expected to find our quarry. Pulling back the rifle stops, I now crept quietly upwards, with Donald at my elbow. We were within a few yards of the top when an old cock grouse flew off the very summit, crowing as noisily as he could. "Quick, sir—run up," whispered Donald, and together we dashed forwards to crouch behind a big stone, only to see the whole herd of stags packed together and heading at a trot for my host's hiding place, which was about a mile away. It was annoying beyond everything to be beaten like this just as success seemed certain; there were, it is true, several good stags trotting off, offering fair shots at about a hundred and twenty yards, but my special prize—my Royal—was so covered by others I could not even get a chance at him.

"Tak' that yun, you'll get no other," said Donald, as he pointed to a good shootable beast broadside on; but I was so vexed that I declined his advice, and sat watching the hinds join the stags, while the whole herd ambled suspiciously away. In the meanwhile the full-cocked rifle was held in readiness to take any chance at the big stag. At last, his head showing clear of the crowd, crack! crack! both bullets were sent pinging after him, with no other effect than putting the whole herd to a violent gallop. It was an almost impossible shot, and though recognising that fact, yet a feeling of utter disgust took possession of me. Mechanically I reloaded, not with any intention of firing again, but from pure force of habit. An old hind led the herd, who suddenly, for no apparent reason, turned sharp to the left, taking the whole lot with her; and now, instead of going away end on, they were crossing us some 200 yards distant in almost single file, each stag in turn presenting his broadside. Recognising the altered position of affairs, hope revived in me as Donald whispered, "Steady, sir; that's him, last but three."

Holding well forward as I pressed the trigger, the Royal fell stone dead in his tracks without so much as a struggle. Overjoyed at this happy result, the left barrel was emptied at another good stag, which also fell mortally wounded. Running up to our quarry, we found the Royal quite dead, so I stayed to admire him while Donald gave the *coup de grâce* to the other one. The big stag was struck in the very centre of the heart, and though of course it was where the bullet was intended to go, I could not help feeling it was very lucky to have placed it so exactly, for he was going at a hard gallop and we stepped it 212 paces, so that, allowing for ups and downs, it could fairly be called 180 yards in a straight line.

By the time the beast had been gralloched and lunch eaten it was nearly three o'clock, when it suddenly occurred to me it was Saturday, and therefore, unless we could get the Royal home that evening, he would have to stay out until Monday morning, a period of nearly forty-eight hours, during which foxes, eagles, or rain might all combine to spoil him.

As this was not to be thought of, and as the Lodge was but four miles in a bee-line, I despatched Donald at best pace to fetch a pony, telling him I would wait his return to help him put the stag in the saddle, for no one man could have done this unassisted. Donald having departed, seating myself by my prize, there was ample time to admire anew his goodly proportions and noble antlers—a perfectly shaped chandelier horn of great substance and width, with very long, strong brow antlers, as were also the three points on each top. Since that happy day I have carefully looked at many Royal heads hanging round the walls of friends' houses, and have seen but few that could "take the shine" out of the one that was then by my side, and I must confess it had already become a matter of speculation as to whether it would be given me to grace the walls of my dining-room. Soon after Donald left I was joined by Lucy, who had witnessed all that happened from his hiding-place on Malaneach; but when at last Donald returned with the pony, we found the deer-saddle had rotten girths, so getting the stag home was a long and trouble-

My First Royal

some business, and, owing to repeated breaks, Corrour was only eventually reached by ten o'clock, where we found Williams, who had brought home twenty-seven brace of grouse, well-nigh famished, as he had all too politely waited dinner for us. Later on my host sent me to bed in a most happy frame of mind, by telling me to have the head packed and sent off, to be set up for my very own. The next day, although it was "the Saabeth," we weighed him 21 stone quite clean—that is, without heart or liver. The total bag at Corrour this season, up to the 14th of September—"twenty-seven days out, eight of them very wet and only half days"—was :—

6	stags.
52	ptarmigan.
1804	grouse.
117	various (hares, ducks, snipe, and black-game).
1979	

As Charles Williams only shot grouse for three days, this was a bag that any two guns might fairly be proud of making. The grouse were all shot over dogs, while

during the whole time neither of us fired simultaneously at the same bird.

During my stay at Corrour Lucy's butler, a most reliable man, used to amuse himself in the afternoons by catching trout in a burn which ran near by. One day he came back with the following extraordinary story. He told us that, having fished some half-mile below the house, he sat down to smoke a pipe on a high bank of heather some thirty yards from a miniature pool, through which the stream ran very sluggishly. While thus resting, he saw a great number of rats approaching the burn from the opposite side; he estimated the company to be some hundreds strong, and being curious to see what such a crowd of these pests could be doing, he sat quite still and remained unnoticed. When the rats reached the bank of the burn, their leader went into the water and held on to a heather root with his teeth, while another one passed over his back, and, taking hold of the leader's tail, dropped himself into the water, this process being repeated time after time, until the living

bridge thus formed reached close to the opposite bank, all the rats in the water meanwhile paddling hard with their feet to keep their bridge from being carried down stream, and as there was but little current, this they easily managed to do. Then, as soon as the remainder of the shore rats, which were chiefly young ones, saw that the bridge was nearly complete, one by one they proceeded to cross over on the backs of their parents and leapt to shore from the back of the last link in the living chain. As soon as the whole of the juveniles had passed, the bridge dissolved itself into individuals, who quickly swam ashore, and the whole party resumed their march.

During the remainder of 1881 I had many pleasant days of sport with Edward Lawson on his recently purchased estate of Hall Barn, in Bucks. The head of game on this property was not then nearly so heavy as judicious preservation has now made it, but as a specimen sort of day of that period, I see that in company with our host, Sir George Prescott, Sir Roger Palmer, John Edwards Moss, R. Serecold, Willie Lawson, and

S. H. Phillips, on a "dark and windy day," we took on November 24th, out of Burtley and Great Bower Woods, 198 pheasants, 13 hares, 53 rabbits, and 5 pigeons, or 279 head. During this day Lawson shot a weasel with a fresh-killed mouse in its mouth, so that it seems even this most inveterate of poachers likes a change of diet, and can at times make himself positively useful.

On nearly the last day of this shooting season—viz., the 28th January, 1882—I had a most sporting day with my old friend and brother officer, Captain F. D. Webb—"The Reefer" of his intimates—when, in company with his brother, Godfrey Webb, we made on their property, lying round Milford House, Godalming, a bag containing eight sorts of game, a matter not often or easily accomplished so near London. We also saw black-game, which we of course did not try to shoot; likewise great lots of duck, of which we bagged six, while snipe, pheasant, partridge, teal, widgeon, hare, and rabbit made up the eight varieties.

CHAPTER IV.

1882.

I CANNOT pass on to the events of this year without mentioning a matter not perhaps strictly connected with sport, although it relates to shooting, and I will tell how in June I won the Gun Club International Cup of £300, with £250 in it and £200 in bets, the richest prize ever shot for in England; while, as nearly all the well-known trap-shots toed the mark, the slice of luck that landed me first past the post was indeed something to remember. There were eighty-seven shooters at £5 each, and at the end of the fourteenth round a tie was called between Viscount Obert, Captain Frank Gist, each standing at twenty-eight yards, and myself, at thirty. In shooting off we each killed our next two birds, though one of mine went off apparently unhurt, and only just as it reached

the stone wall of the boundary was it seen to weaken and fall dead against it. On Gist starting the seventeenth round, he shot under a fast-rising bird each time, which departed unscathed. The Viscount killed, and I having followed suit, then asked him if he would like to divide the added money of £350 (for the second prize was worth £100) and shoot the match out for the cup? To this suggestion Obert shook his head determinedly, and politely declined the offer.

Now, I had already heard my opponent was one of the "cracks" of Belgium, and handicapped in his own club at 31 metres, or just over 33 yards; so, as I was now giving him two yards, when, according to the handicapper, he should have been giving me three, I did not feel very hopeful of victory. Closely did I watch my antagonist take his place for the eighteenth bird, and it struck me—though it may have been but imagination—that he showed signs of nervousness; at any rate his bird, hit with both barrels, wriggled over the wall, to fall dead outside,

and I was left to kill to win £750. Would that such chances came oftener! I do not think I showed any outward sign of funk, but as the betting on the deciding shot was very heavy, in addition to the large sum at stake for myself, there was the thought of losing a great deal more for my friends, and I freely own to having felt a hitherto unknown sensation of anxiety as I called "Pull." Over came the left-hand corner trap—my special aversion—releasing a low-flying rock, which dashed off at a great pace with a zig-zag flight. Before I fired the first barrel I thought, "By Jove! I'm done;" and a miss it was. Then, before I pulled the second barrel, it flashed across me, "Take it as if it were a partridge! It's an easy shot if it was game shooting;" and acting on this inspiration, I "felt" for the bird, pulled the trigger, and grassed it amidst a shower of congratulations. It may read nearly impossible that I could have thought all I have related between the pull of the trap and the discharge of the second barrel, but nevertheless it is the fact, and doubtlessly thoughts pass through one's brain quicker even than the

lightning flash descends from the skies. Later in the afternoon I asked the Viscount why he had declined to divide, and learnt from him that he had taken a bet of a thousand pounds to thirty against his winning outright from the late Mr. Bachelor—the ever popular "Sam"—who often made a book of a thousand pounds on the shooting events in which there were large numbers of competitors. Luckily for me, the Viscount thought—goodness only knows why—that I wished to go halves in this bet, as well as halves in the pool! Perhaps the fact of my French being rusty, and his English being *nil*, helped to complicate matters. Thus luckily I secured the entire stake and prize, while, as Bachelor had laid me two hundred pounds to eight against myself, the total win amounted to £750. Cheerfully did the lamented "Sam" hand me this money, for it was all he had laid against the winner, as directly I had killed a bird or two, and he saw I was "in form," he astutely kept me as a good outsider to shoot for his book, and thus my win was a real good thing for him also.

On the 1st of September this year I found myself staying at Burnham Beeches with the late Montague Williams, our party being made up by Willie Lawson and Harry Parker, when in wettish weather we got eighty-three birds between us. A somewhat ludicrous thing happened during the day. Williams' keeper, who rejoiced in the odd-sounding name of Puddephat, having reared some 200 tame partridges, had turned them out in coveys of twenty, and during all the morning master and man were continually wondering why we had not met with any of them. At last the whole 200 birds rose in one big lot out of a grass-field, only to fly, much to our disgust, straight off our ground. During the rest of the day we could hear great popping going on in the enemy's camp, and there was but little doubt that our neighbours had got behind this large pack of birds and "mopped them up." It is well known that hand-reared partridges, when divided and turned out in coveys, will be nearly certain to re-assemble unless the lots be placed so far apart as to be out of calling distance from each other.

Poor Montague! what an amusing companion he was! But he was always better with his tongue than with his gun, for his greatest friend could not have called him "safe." Later on this season I was present when he lodged a pellet in the nose of my brother-in-law, Russell Ward. The sinner was perfectly unconscious he had fired a dangerous shot, and on Ward showing him the result of his handiwork, Montague threw up his hands in horror, exclaiming: "Dear me! I really am the *most unfortunate* fellow in the world, for this makes the sixth friend I have hit this season." However, all's well that ends well, and the wounded man was the first to lead the laughter we could not suppress on hearing this strange lament.

On September 7th I found myself staying with George Faudel Phillips at Balls Park, Hertford, where, in a few showery days, Col. Daniel with Cecil Block joining us each day, we got just one hundred birds, for it was a bad season in these parts.

Next, on the 19th, the walls of Corrour Lodge held me once more, where I stayed till the 13th

October. The best of the grouse shooting being over, the greater part of the time was devoted to stalking, and we only bagged 108 grouse and 12 ptarmigan, with some few hares, snipe, and black-game. This season was ever afterwards alluded to by us as the "missing" one, for we both shot badly. What Lucy did I will not record, but I can safely say I beat him handsomely, for I had fourteen good shots and killed but two stags. Now how that happened puzzles me to this day; however, there is the melancholy fact, only to be erased from my memory later on by a score of sixteen stags for eighteen bullets.

On October 6th we were joined by the late Lord Alexander Paget, as keen a stalker and as pleasant a companion as I ever met. Poor "Dandy"—or as old Allan McCallum, the head forester, always called him, "Yon Lord Dandy"—also had his share of Corrour bad luck that season, for in the six days following his advent he was out early and home late in all sorts of weather, and though Lucy sent him each day to the best ground, he got

but a single shot in all the time, when, however, he made a kill.

During Paget's visit an incident happened which made both Lucy and I laugh on one side of our faces and "swear" on the other. It so happened that we met by accident on the top of the hill overlooking Corrour Lodge. It was quite early in the afternoon, but as each of us had spied the whole of his beat without seeing so much as a horn of any sort, we were making the best of our way home, each carrying his share of an attack of the "dolefuls." We had hardly exchanged greetings and commenced the descent, when on our left front we heard the reports of two barrels, followed at once by two others.

"What on earth can that be?" said Lucy, as we dropped on our backs and pulled out the glasses.

"The light is so bad," continued he, "that I can't make out who they are, but I'm nearly sure they must be some of the Rannoch Lodge people who have strayed off their march, and if that is the case, they will not get back to Rannoch till long after dark, so let us go down

and try if we cannot persuade them to stay and dine with us and take a bed at Corrour."

Accordingly, on hospitable thoughts intent, we struck off to the left, and in a short time we were within a mile of the two shooters, who were getting plenty of sport, as shots were very frequent. Then we again took another spy and became somewhat puzzled, for we saw there was no keeper with them, and yet it seemed impossible that a couple of poachers would be so daring as to come and shoot grouse over dogs in broad daylight and within hearing of the Lodge. However, our suspicions were raised, and from this moment we proceeded to stalk the shooters, and so well did we do it that neither of them became aware of us until we were within thirty yards of them, when, lo and behold! we found ourselves face to face with Lucy's butler (not the one of the rat story) and Paget's valet.

My host kept his temper admirably, and telling the culprits to take up the dogs and follow us home, we left them looking very crestfallen. The next morning, in what Lucy called the "sweating room," each got pretty

well hauled over the coals. Notwithstanding all the shots we heard fired, their bag was but three birds; and Paget's man had studied his master's interests by using Lucy's gun and cartridges, and Lucy's man had done the same by his master and used mine. Neither, however, got "the sack," for they were both exceptionally good servants, and we afterwards had many a laugh in recalling the blank looks of astonishment depicted on the faces of the two shooters when we surprised them, as we were each supposed to be at least ten miles distant.

In the month of November I had two nice days at Hall Barn, which gave a total of 592 head, chiefly pheasants, to seven guns each day, Sir Robert Harvey, Sir Roger Palmer, Brydges Willyams, Coleman of Stoke Park, Archie Wortley, Willie Lawson, and Ben Way joining us on either one or the other of these days.

On the first day (the 11th November), Archie Wortley gave us a display which only a well-trained sportsman would have recognised as the right thing to do. During the course of the day, while shooting Dipple Wood, we

came to a beat near the outside of the property which was full of pheasants, numbers of which could at times fly back over the beaters and so pass right off the shooting. For this reason it was always necessary to have a reliable gun with the beaters, and on that day the post fell to Wortley, and as the cover about to be beaten was chiefly low gorse, bracken, and broom, the guns posted in front could see the beaters approaching from the very first start, and all of us saw that Wortley could easily have had some sixty shots at birds rising close to him, but which, if left alone, would be sure to come very high to the forward guns; and not a shot did he fire at a single bird likely to do this, and like a "good man," he sacrificed the poor pleasure of killing a lot of easy birds, and thus gave to his friends in front a series of difficult and sporting shots.

The remainder of this season was filled up by pleasant days with George Phillips at Balls Park, Sir Robert Harvey at Langley Park, Slough, and with Sir Charles Booth at Netherfield, Herts.

1883.

The sport of this year opened with a month of March fishing on the Aboyne water in connection with the Huntly Arms Hotel. It snowed and froze the whole time, and for many days we could not fish for the ice. My brother-in-law, Captain John Malcolmson, V.C., was with me, and our total score for the whole month was but eighteen fish, the bulk of which fell to my minnow as against his fly, and before either of us got a clean fish we landed twenty-nine kelts.

On the 2nd April I met with a real good ducking on the Glen Tana water, while fishing the Kirk Pot in wading trousers from the north side. A large piece of rock broke from under my feet, and I flopped into some eight feet of rapid running water, and on striking out, I could clearly see my feet above my head. While fighting my hardest to reverse this unsatisfactory position, I was banged against a piece of projecting rock, and clinging on, was quickly out. I had my pipe in my mouth as I fell in, but did not let

go, and neither was the rod parted with, which, perhaps, had something to do with the poor progress made in trying to swim. John Power, one of Sir W. Cunliffe Brook's keepers, was with me that day, and wore a long, woollen, navy blue sailor's jersey; so, as the sun was shining, I stripped and donned this garment, and ran up and down the bank to keep myself warm, while the wet ones, having been wrung out, were spread on a bush to dry, when after a time to allow wind and sun to do their work, I dressed again, and fished the day out.

This adventure set me thinking how to minimise the danger that must present itself when anyone falls into deep water with the trousers on; and later in the year, when the temperature was higher, I tried some experiments out of a boat with a rope round me, and many plunges into deep and running water were made with the waders on. The conclusion was quickly arrived at that it is far better to wear them unstrapped round the waist, as they fill so much the quicker when open; and next I discovered that the only way that I, by no means a strong swimmer, could

keep afloat, was to turn on my back, draw the knees as near to the chin as they would come, and with arms fully extended, and mouth and nostrils but just clear of the water, I found I could float a sufficient time to let me paddle by degrees to shallow or bank.

On the 10th August I arrived at Raehills, near Beattock, for a lengthy stay with an old friend, Captain John Hope Johnstone, Cholmondeley Pennell and Captain Gordon Hughes making up the party. This year the "twelfth" fell on a Sunday, and as the 13th and few days following were very wet, we did not fairly get at the grouse until the 17th, when, shooting the Lochanhead beat, we brought home fifty and a half brace, while on the 20th we had other forty-five brace, and on the 24th Pennell and I had a pretty mixed bag of eleven grouse, four black-cocks, twenty snipe, two teal, a hare, and a rabbit. In these happy quarters I stayed till the 22nd September, during which time we had twenty-four days of sport, many of them very wet, which yielded us 7 fallow bucks, 603 grouse, 26 black-cocks, 59 snipe, 79 partridges, 13 hares, and 7 ducks, or 814 head. We

RAEHILLS.

also took many pounds weight of fine trout, as well as three salmon, from the Annan, which runs for several miles through this beautiful estate. The Raehills venison used to be the finest in the kingdom, and it is sad to think this splendid herd of fallow deer no longer exists, the exigencies of modern farming, combined with the absence of any fenced park, necessitating their removal. The Raehills bucks were savage fighters, and on several occasions during my visit, directed to the spot by the clashing of the horns, I was a hidden witness of some fierce combats. Round after round was fought, during which thrusts were given and parried with all the quickness and grace of a couple of Parisian fencing masters. Then, after this preliminary skirmishing, the combatants, getting their horns well locked, would set to work like two Cornish wrestlers, to struggle with each other till the grip broke. Time after time this would be repeated, until one buck, feeling he was getting the worst of it, would turn tail and bolt, hotly pursued by the victor. Every season these duels were fatal to one or two of these fine stags, and, from what I witnessed

at Raehills, I think the fallow buck is a bolder and fiercer fighter than the red stag. As the Raehills Park is not fenced off from the rest of the property, these bucks were practically wild, and though easy enough to approach when feeding on the grass lawns surrounding the house, when once well away from that sanctuary they became so exceeding wide awake as to offer difficult and exciting wood-stalking, rarely indeed giving a fair standing shot.

In these days rabbits abounded in great numbers at Raehills, and once each season they were the occasion of an odd match between two of our host's keepers and two of his guests, the two former, each armed with a worn-down old stable-fork, backing themselves for a supper to make a better score than any two guests using their guns. From being seldom disturbed, the rabbits sat out freely in the long grass of the park and its policies, and the contending parties, after tossing for upper or lower side of the park, then separated. The two guns, with a man behind each for carrying, walked hither and thither, making the best kill they could, while the two keepers,

each wandering where he liked, found the bunnies with their eyes and pinned them on their seats with the worn-down prong; and, strange as it may read, the keepers invariably won this match.

The 25th September found me again at beloved Corrour, and *this* season was certainly *not* a "missing" one, for from the 26th September to the 11th October Lucy and I put twenty-one fat stags into the larder, the heaviest of which, a fine ten-pointer of 17 stone 10 lbs., fell to the Purdey rifle of my host. In addition we got a few ptarmigan and fifty brace of grouse, so it can be seen we did not let the grass grow under our feet during these thirteen days, in which must be included a Sunday and two others on which the weather was absolutely too bad to go out in. During this period Lucy killed eleven of the twenty-one stags without making a miss, whilst the other ten fell to my share, while each of us lost a wounded one late in the day.

On October 2nd my "Game Book" records that Lucy got a good stag in the sky-line above the Lodge, when, after dragging him down to the track for the pony to

fetch, he stalked "the Flat," there making a fine shot at 250 yards at a heavy ten-pointer, who had so many hinds with him that it was impossible to get any nearer.

On the 10th of October I had a bit of luck when coming home somewhat depressed after a blank day, for when near the Sword Loch, on the East March of Corrour, we heard two reports ring out from the sky-line in front of us. This brought us at once to a halt, and, pulling out the glasses, we soon saw our neighbour, Lord Cowper (who in conjunction with Lord Brownlow had rented Sir Robert Menzies' forest of Rannoch that year), while, better still, we quickly discovered he had missed a good stag, which we could also see was galloping full steam ahead towards us. On that day I had "young Allan" for stalker, who knew right well the course the beast would take; so, after making a short run, we had only to keep still and wait, when in a few minutes past us came the now slowly trotting stag, exactly broadside on, and, the ball doing its duty, a few minutes later saw us standing over a fat eight-pointer,

and thus what had promised to have been but a dismal procession to the Lodge was turned into a rejoicing tramp, for needless to say it is extra fun to get a stag that someone else has missed a short time previously.

On the 15th of October I started for the south, never, I fear, to see again the dear old lodge at Corrour, for Lucy's lease ended this year, and he did not renew it. A few years later the property was purchased from Colonel Walker, the then owner, by Sir John Stirling Maxwell. The old lodge has been condemned, and a new one is being built on the shores of Loch Ossian, more in the centre of the ground and close to the railway station! How strange that sounds to me, for in the days I write of Loch Ossian was so solitary as to be quite out of reach of tourist or angler, though now I suppose the inevitable hotel will follow, and tourists and fishers will be all over the place.

The Corrour estate, moreover, was full of legends and memoirs of historical events. Here Charles Edward wandered on Mealaneach, while the history of how the Sword Loch won that name is quite a small story

in itself. On those hills, also, Donald MacFinlay, the celebrated deer-stalking bard, lived and died, and was buried wrapped in a deer-hide and laid on the brow of a hill overlooking Loch Treig, where, as he said, "the deer could couch on his bed and the little calves rest by his side."

The hill of Ben-y-Vricht and the Corrie of Corrie Craegacht have likewise been famed for their deer from the earliest days, and woe is me that I shall never again tramp the rugged sides of either the one or the other.

In the days gone by when I stalked at Corrour with that good sportsman, the late Mr. Henry Spencer Lucy, the whole ground was not afforested. Corrie Craegacht, Corrie Vallich, Corrie-na-Cloich, with the Green Face, which joined the forests of Ben Alder and Rannoch, was the whole of the cleared ground, and there it was that most of our deer were got. Ben Eibhein (3611 feet) and Ben-na-Lapt (3060 feet) have both been put under deer since those days, which has made the present kill nearly double what it was in Lucy's time, when two

rifles used to average twenty-five stags a season, scaling about 14 stone 12 lbs. quite clean. The heads were unusually stout, wild, rough, and black, for before the adjacent forest of Mamore was entirely surrounded by wire by the late Mr. Thistlethwaite, the hinds of Corrour found mates from there, from the Black Mount, Ben Alder, and Ardverikie, so that no ground could possibly be better placed for insuring an incessant change of blood, while the hind ground of the lower lying parts of Corrour was ever doing good service as a nursery for the young stags of all the adjoining forests. In the rutting season, before the Mamore wire was put up, so continuous was the passing to and fro of stags that old Allan MacCallum, who lived at Corrour Lodge during the shooting season, ever kept a sharp and early look-out "across the flat," over which the Black Mount deer were wont to travel, and more than once Allan was in time to wake his master and get him into the pass leading to Corrie Craegacht, for which the deer usually made, and so secure a good shot. On these occasions Lucy, forced into a hasty toilette, merely pulled on his

knickerbockers, and hurrying a covert coat over his night-shirt, with stockingless feet thrust into a pair of "hardy brogues," in this get-up he presented an appearance at which we had many a hearty laugh.

At the east end of Corrour, and now, I believe, in view of the railway to Fort William, is the celebrated Loch-an-Chlaidhame, or Sword Loch, and as thousands of tourists will now view it from the train, while perhaps some even will stroll rod in hand around its peaty banks, the story of how the loch won its name fully deserves a notice, the more so as the facts are well authenticated. In the middle, then, of the sixteenth century, Cameron of Lochiel owned Ben-y-Vricht, with Corrour and most of the land adjacent. Between him and the Earl of Athol there existed a long-standing dispute as to their marches and grazing rights on certain of the eastern slopes of Ben-y-Vricht, which were then, even as they are now, famed for rich pasturage; hence, many were the sanguinary petty fights continually taking place over this disputed point between the followers of the two lairds. It happened that Lochiel met the Earl of

Athol by chance in Perth, when the Earl, expressing his regret at the constant loss of life entailed by the dispute, proposed that they should meet on the property in question, each accompanied by but two retainers, and then and there on the spot endeavour to settle the doubtful boundaries in a friendly manner. To such a reasonable offer Lochiel at once consented, and accordingly on the day before the meeting he, with his two vassals, started from their home in Lochaber, in order to arrive at the trysting-place in good time. On his way he met the wise woman of Moy, who, on hearing his errand, commanded him to turn back and collect "three-score and five" of his stoutest warriors and take them with him. In those times no one dreamt of disputing the orders of a reputed wise woman or witch; therefore Lochiel did as he was instructed, and then, setting forth once more, he concealed the whole of his retinue except two in a hollow near the meeting ground.

Before leaving them to confront the Earl, he explained the purpose of his journey, and then, holding up a cloak,

he showed them it was grey on one side, and scarlet on the other; and telling them he should approach the Earl wearing the grey side out, which would instantly be reversed to scarlet at the least sign of treachery, he bade them keep a sharp look out to be ready to come to his aid should the necessity arise.

Exactly at midday the two chieftains met, each with his two attendants; then began the discussion, which, although commencing in the most amicable manner, by degrees developed into a heated one, and at last into downright hot, rude words. Suddenly the Earl waved his bonnet, at which signal fifty fully-armed Athol men bounded into sight from behind a hill that had hidden them. Sternly Lochiel demanded of the Earl what these men might mean, receiving for reply, "They are but fifty Athol wedders come to graze on Ben-y-Vricht, so now, Lochiel, I have you in my power, and submit you must to my terms."

While the Earl was making this declaration with mocking politeness, Lochiel had turned his cape, at which signal his sixty-five men dashed from their hiding-place

to the support of their beloved chief, who, turning on the Earl sword in hand, retorted in the same spirit, "And here are sixty-five Lochaber dogs, each one athirst to taste the blood of your Athol wedders."

As the Lochaber men were nearer to the chieftains than the Athol people, the Earl saw at a glance it would be folly to engage so superior a force with a certainty of being himself the first man killed; therefore, changing his tone, he frankly admitted Lochiel had outwitted him, and, consenting to yield all points in dispute, he then and there swore on the hilt of his sword—in those days the Highlander's most solemn form of oath—that he would renounce all claim to the grazings of Ben-y-Vricht, in token of which he hurled his sword into the loch, "to remain for ever there as an acknowledgment of this compact."

In the year 1826, this very sword, or all that remained of it, was picked out of the loch in a season of great drought by the son of the Caimb herd, who took it to a collector of ancient relics, the Rev. Dr. Ross, of Kilmonivaig. The story, however, got noised abroad, and

shortly afterwards the reverend gentleman was waited on by twelve Lochaber men, who demanded back the sword as being a landmark which no one had any right to remove, and on obtaining it, what remained of the rusted basket hilt and a few inches of blade were once more replaced in the loch with much solemnity.

During this autumn came many happy days at Hall Barn, Langley Park, Denham Place (the late Ben Way's), and Balls Park, where we had one special day of 725 head, chiefly pheasants, our party being, in addition to our host, and his brother, Hal Phillips, Lord Greville, Brydges Willyams, Sir George Prescott, Edward Henty, Captain Parker, of Ware Park (an extra good pheasant shot), Frank Lawson and Colonel Blair. Formidable as ten guns may sound, we were none too many, for Balls Wood covers an oblong area of 200 acres, cut into chessboard rides ; permitting, therefore, the guarding of all the four sides of every beat.

On the 30th of November, when shooting at Denham Place, I was stationed at the end of an osier bed, which was being beaten towards me. At my feet ran a fine

trout stream, and as my eyes explored the water, they caught sight of a pike of about six pounds lying near the surface; so, thinking he was a customer that would not be wanted in a trout preserve, I shot at him, or rather below him, while as this was done a cock pheasant rose and came high over me, to be laid low by the other barrel; and thus I brought off an unusual "double," for the pike came floating down stream to me, barely kicking, and was pulled ashore with my gun barrels.

CHAPTER V.

1884.

On the 10th of February I arrived, with my brother-in-law, Capt. Malcolmson, V.C., at "The Cottage," Banchory, on Deeside, to fish the Kineskie and Upper Crathes water, which I had rented for the spring from the late Sir Robert Burnett. It was a cheap fishing (sixty pounds I *think* was the rent, there or thereabouts, but I cannot be quite sure). This stretch of water had, however, often lacked a tenant for the early months, as spring fish did not rest in it. It had, however, never been fished with the natural minnow, and I took it solely with the view of giving that lure a good trial amidst running fish, as I held the opinion that though travelling ones will rarely halt to look at a fly, yet they will often stop to swallow a good fat minnow. The latter

half of February being beautifully mild, with the water in good order, to my surprise Malcolmson, sticking entirely to the fly, got fourteen fish in twelve days against my thirteen to lures of all sorts, the twenty-seven averaging nine and a half pounds. In addition to this we also hauled ashore and returned to the water unhurt just eighty kelts. This somewhat shook my faith in the minnow, but being obliged to go south, I sublet the water for the month of March to three brothers of the name of Hoare. From that moment the weather changed, turning cold and frosty with heavy falls of snow, so that when I returned to Banchory on the 1st of April—auspicious day!—with my friend Sam Barker for my guest, I was horrified to learn that the take for the whole of March had been but five fish to the three rods.

Reaching Banchory on Tuesday, April 1st, we were quickly on the river, and came home with a fish each; for the thaw commenced from that day, and things went better for sport. Barker left me on the 10th, having killed six fish; while at the end of the month I too

came south, for the hill snows had long since vanished, while cold east wind, with bright days and frosty nights, reduced the river to summer level and ended all chance of getting sport. That state of affairs lasted through May, June and July, so that this was one of the worst seasons ever known on Deeside. During the month of April I got twenty-two fish solely by the aid of the minnow; and as, after Barker left me on the 10th, there was more water than I could cover alone, my two gillies fished every day with fly, and while I took twelve fish, they captured but three between them. Both these men were extra good with the rod and knew every stone in the river, and anyone at Banchory will confirm me when I say that Bremner and Dawson were (and no doubt still are) two good hard-working men. Altogether on this water I totalled up sixty-six fish, averaging nine and a half pounds; and all things considered, I was quite satisfied.

On August the 11th I arrived at Elibank-on-Tweed on a visit to Barker, and the 12th I shall never forget, for we had no sooner reached our highest ground—

which, if I remember rightly, was some eighteen hundred feet above sea level—than we were overtaken by the most violent thunderstorm it has ever been my lot to witness. As the tempest reached us we hid our guns in the heather, and, moving some distance away, fell flat on our faces to watch with anxious eyes the black clouds charged with electricity come rolling up over the top of the hill we were on. The lightning was so close to us that it did not seem to flash, as it does when viewed from a distance, but the clouds simply appeared to open with one great blaze of vivid light, the report following the next second. The lightning twice ploughed up the peat close to us, while we afterwards learnt that some sheep sheltering under a rock not two hundred yards from where we crouched were all killed. At the first abatement of the storm we made a bolt in a bee-line for Elibank, glad to reach it uninjured—a feeling which was accentuated when in the evening we heard that Lord Lauderdale had been killed by lightning some ten miles away, and I have but little doubt that, had we been as rash as

he was, we should most likely have shared a similar fate; for while his lordship's keepers were all flat on their faces during the height of the storm, their master, though urged by them to take up a similar position, paid no heed to the tempest, and mounting his pony on the bare hill top, he had hardly started homewards ere they were both struck, the pony falling dead, although his lordship lingered in a state of unconsciousness for a few hours.

The 13th was fine, all traces of the storm having vanished, and we got 20 brace of grouse that day, which was a good bag for the place, there being but a little over a thousand acres of heather. In eleven days' shooting we totalled 328 head, made up of 253 grouse, 43 black-game, 12 hares, 9 snipe, and 11 rabbits. Elibank Cottage is prettily placed high up over the Tweed, though, to my mind, rather too much shut in by trees. The river is said to yield good trouting, but certain it is they were not to be caught in the month of August by any blandishments my host or I could offer.

Invermark Old Castle.

The 1st of September found me again at Balls Park, and after the usual happy time there, the 12th saw me arriving at Invermark by Brechin, in Forfarshire, on a visit to the late Sir Robert Bateson Harvey; his two sons, Grenville and Charles, with Thomas Kennard, making up the party. In the seven days I had here we put into the larder 11 stags, 291 grouse, 7 black-cocks, 5 partridges, 15 hares, and 5 rabbits; while of the grouse 157 were got in a day's driving on the 20th. On the 22nd it was my turn to miss the forest, and when I returned home in the evening with twenty-two brace of grouse, I found the stalkers had been in good luck, for Grenville and Charles Harvey and Kennard had each got two stags.

Going south once more, I had further pleasant days at Hall Barn and Burnham Beeches, till, on the 20th, I found myself the guest of Charles Eley at Stody Lodge, Melton Constable, where in four days five of us got 279 partridges, 44 pheasants, and 16 various. Then, in November, I was again Mr. Eley's guest for a couple of days' partridge driving at East Bergholt,

near Colchester. That expedition finished, on the 17th of the month Balls Park welcomed me again; and on the 18th ten of us got 853 head, chiefly pheasants. Then came more days at most of the places already mentioned, and altogether during this season I had just over eighty days with my gun, and as the whole of it is but about 150 days, it was a pretty good allowance.

1885.

The 11th of February found me once more rod in hand, and renting the Kineskie and Upper Crathes water of the Dee. The opening day proved a real good one, as in the evening five fish from the Kineskie water, all taken with natural minnow, were laid out on the stone slab at our front door. Then down came the frost to stop all sport from the 13th to the 23rd, and during these ten days the river was frozen, and there was nothing to be done but watch the clouds and the aneroid, while trying to forget, in the fascinations of curling, that there was a salmon river near at hand.

When the thaw did come, it was very sudden, and the ice broke up before the river rose much, and large floes of great thickness were carried headlong down the quick-running streams.

On the day the thaw began I took my rod on to Kineskie water with Gillie Bremner, in the hopes of finding a clear space for a cast or two, but the ice was so broken up and scattered all over the water, that I gave it up as hopeless. While walking home along the bank, I saw what I took to be a dead kelt, lying in a few feet of water; so, with a view to interment, it was pulled ashore by the gaff, when, lo and behold! it was found to be a quite clean-run fish, to which the only apparent damage was a blow on the nose, clearly caused by meeting a big lump of ice. Further down we found a second one with exactly the same injury, and from this it would seem that when ice breaks up in great blocks before there is any large rise in the river, then a good few running fish are sure to be killed in this way.

The thaw was of course followed by the usual floods,

and on the 7th March I had to go south with a score of twenty-two fish to the minnow, and other ten got by Bremner with the fly. I then let the water for a month to Captain Upton Gaskell, and he got twenty-eight fish. After that Mr. C. Wollaston had it for the next month, with a result of twenty-five fish; and in May he was succeeded by Mr. A. M. Aitken, who scored twenty fish; while in June and July Mr. Wollaston fished it again and got forty-two salmon and grilse, with thirteen large sea trout, the total being 138 salmon and grilse for the season, which I believe still remains the best take ever made on this water in the spring and summer fishing.

The 12th of August found me once more with Barker at Elibank, and the whole of that day it deluged so heavily that we did not go out. As the moor was small, while the weather kept broken, we picked our days, so only went shooting on those that were dry, and thus in just a dozen days we bagged 361 grouse, with some black-game, snipe, and hares, making up the total to 415 head.

Going south again, I had five days at Balls Park, during which time we got just 100 brace of birds, and then the 14th of September found me again at Invermark, our party including Martyn Kennard and G. E. Gladstone. On the 16th and 21st we had grouse drives, and on each of these occasions I was unlucky enough to draw a bad number. On the first day there was a very high wind, which sent the few birds that did come to the butts at a pace requiring very good shooting to stop them. As hardly any birds came to my butt, I began to count the shots, and when I ceased it had taken just 186 cartridges to put exactly sixty birds into the bag. The first drive directly down wind took seventy-three cartridges for fifteen birds; at the second and third drives, on a cross wind, sixty-seven shots brought in a return of twenty-five birds; while the fourth and fifth drives, nearly directly up wind, required only forty-two discharges for twenty birds; and a comparison of the result of the last drives, as compared with the first one, will open the eyes of my readers to the vast difference there is in the speed of any bird flying

with or against a strong wind, and on this particular day I should say the shooters, as a body, were above the average.

On the 18th Gladstone killed his first stag, stalking with John Mitchell on the South Beat of the forest, while on the same day I got 105 bunnies, ferreting the rocks on the side of Loch Lee. On starting for my trip, Sir Robert asked me if I would use some lightly loaded cartridges he kept expressly for this rabbit shooting. I think he said they held 36 grains of E.C. and three-quarters of an ounce of No. 5. At first I was somewhat loath to discard my own cartridges of Schultz—42 grains 1 oz. No. 5, "Field Loading"—but on hearing that the bunnies had perforce to be shot at somewhat close quarters, on account of their holes being so numerous and so near together, I at once assented. The first shot I fired gave me an astonishingly hard blow on the cheek and shoulder, and nearly deafened me, so much so that I immediately told the keeper I would use no more of these cartridges, and that he must return to the house and get me some of my own.

Our Party at Invermark.

This seemed to annoy him somewhat, and as there was a grin on his face which appeared to imply I was making a fuss about nothing, I reloaded and told him to fire a shot for himself, and right cheerfully he obeyed; but when, after pulling the trigger, the gun flew out of his hands and he found himself with a bleeding cheekbone and singing ears, he realised that there was something really amiss. "I'm just fairly dazed, sir," said he; "what sort of powder can it be?" Then, suspecting the cause, I questioned him as to where the cartridges had been kept, and learned that, fearing they might have become damp, he always put them each night on the kitchen hob! On hearing this, I spread them out on wet grass and covered them over with damp moss, and thus we left them for fully an hour while we strolled about. Then, with fear and trembling, I fired another shot, when the explosion was of the usual and normal kind, and I went on shooting till I had got 105 rabbits without anything unpleasant again occurring. This *contretemps* only shows how highly dangerous nitro powders become if deprived of all moisture, and how

quickly they absorb the quantity necessary to make them safe when exposed but a very short time to damp surroundings.

On this same day Martyn Kennard also met with a curious incident whilst stalking the North Beat with Macgregor, for after killing his stag, the forester asked him as a favour to come some quarter of a mile out of his way to enable him to visit a fox trap which had been set some days. It was baited with part of a gralloch, and owing to several consecutive days of fine weather, Macgregor had been so busy stalking that he had not been able to find time to visit it. Consent was readily given, when on getting to the spot there they found a splendid golden eagle not very long dead, for it was quite warm when taken out of the trap; it had been caught by the claw only, and it seemed extraordinary that so powerful a bird had not been able to free himself in his struggles. Clearly he had died of exhaustion in his efforts to regain his liberty and not of starvation, for within reach of him, partly eaten, were two grouse and a blue hare quite freshly killed. These

could only have been brought to the captive by other eagles—an almost unique instance, I think, of sagacious affection on the part of his comrades, and one which appealed to the hearts of us all. It was a splendid full-grown bird, whose melancholy end caused Sir Robert much regret; for, by the wish of Lord Dalhousie, from whom the forest was rented, every effort was made to preserve these beautiful birds, so rapidly becoming extinct —a wish in which his tenant most heartily joined, while taking every possible care to have it carried out.

At our grouse drive on the 20th I drew rather too good a place and got peppered at pretty close quarters, just thirteen pellets of No. 6 shot being lodged in head, face and neck, so I can speak with feeling confidence of the penetration of Purdey's guns. The sensation of being struck by many shot at close quarters is a peculiar one and more stunning than painful, and putting me in mind of a very heavy box on the ear, for a perfect knowledge of which feeling at the early age of eleven I was indebted to the Reverend Joseph Newton, at one time a master at Brighton College. Perhaps I

deserved all I received, but the Reverend Joseph lost his temper with me one day when delivering a science lecture to a large class, for during its progress I made a nice little pellet of blotting paper about the size of an S.S.G. shot, which, being impaled on the end of a pen and well soaked in ink, was flicked with the fore-finger as a sign of contempt at a boy I had agreed to fight as soon as the class was over. Alas! the missile went wrong, for instead of passing behind the lecturer, it lodged on his white shirt front. He was a strong, active man, a first-class fives player, who, instantly detecting from whence the black matter came, stooped low, with his left leg well in advance of his right, and struck me two blows on the ear with all his might, and just as if he had been hitting at a fives ball. These blows reduced me to such a dazed and stupid condition that my fight had to be put off, and it was not for some days afterwards that I recovered from their effect. The condition of helplessness I was then reduced to came back to me as these thirteen pellets struck me; it happened, however, to be the last drive

INVERMARK-LODGE.

before lunch, so after washing and being examined by all the party, in which they were assisted by an old shepherd's wife, who was anxious I should undress and show her there were no other wounds, I stayed out for the remainder of the day. The whole baker's dozen of shot are still carried about with me, for those pellets that struck fleshy parts buried themselves, and those that hit on bone or muscle are so firmly fixed that I have never had them removed. During the eight days of sport at Invermark, the bag was 10 stags, 350 grouse, with 236 rabbits and some sundries; and when I left on the 23rd of September, 1840 brace of grouse and 40 stags had been killed that season.

From here I went on to visit Brydges Willyams at Park House, on the Dee—a charming place, with an ideal stretch of autumn fishing, much of which can be cast without wading, and yielding many heavy salmon. Here luck attended my advent, for on the very day on which I put in an appearance the river came into good ply for the first time that autumn. We came in with ten good fish, and I had the pleasure of seeing the first

two I hooked landed respectively by Mrs. Brydges Willyams and Mrs. Powell, neither of whom had ever handled a salmon before, and right well they did the business. During the eight days that I fished the Park water the river was in a very unsettled state, but nevertheless we managed to land 43 salmon, averaging 15 lbs., nearly all having sea lice on them. Out of this total my host (who is a very keen and good fisher) and I tied with eighteen each, the Rev. Hyde Smith accounting for the other seven.

I had one specially good day on the Keith pool when it was in grand order. This is a deep long pool just below Durris bridge; every yard of it has to be cast, while on that day salmon of all sizes were showing every minute. Commencing with a "Glen Tana," one victim was landed; then the "Grey Heron," used for the second time of going over the pool, gave a like result; then two flies were followed by the natural minnow, and all for nothing. Next, as it was a darkish day, "The Gordon" had a turn, when one more fish came to bank before luncheon.

Beginning work again with the "Gordon," another captive to its fascinations was landed. As it was now past three o'clock, the "Yellow Eagle" was given a chance, but produced nothing. Then the minnow again had an opportunity, and two other fish were unable to resist its attractions. This made up the half-dozen, of 28, 23, 12, 10, 10 and 8 lbs. On the very same day my host, fishing in the upper water and using fly only, tied me with six other fish, with almost exactly the same weights. All these twelve fish had sea lice on them, and when laid out on the billiard table (the cloth had vanished long before my friends took possession), they made the best show of autumn fish I ever saw.

There is one distinct advantage the minnow has over the fly, and that is the proved attraction it possesses for "travellers." These it is well known will rarely halt for a mouthful of feathers, though that is not at all the case when the lure is a good fat minnow. This bait will also do well on frosty mornings while ice is yet on the edges of the pools, and all anglers are aware that to fish a fly under such circumstances is

hopeless. Why this should be the case is a mystery, but long experience has taught fishermen to accept the fact as gospel. Once when fishing a fly one April day over "Birkenbad," on the Upper Crathes water of the Dee, a small company of running fish could be seen making their way up stream over the shallow at the tail of the pool, while shortly afterwards they began to splash as they passed out at the head of it. Convinced that these fish must have seen and declined my fly, I instantly took the minnow rod in hand to land two fish in double quick time; then running up stream at best pace, the company of fish was headed at the top of "Floating Bank," where other two were brought ashore, while the rest of them could be seen continuing their journey upwards, so once again getting ahead of them by racing to "Chapel of Ease," one more was accounted for, and then I could follow no further, for they had quitted my water.

Now with a fly I am sure not one of those fish could have been captured, though by the aid of the merry minnow what would have been a blank day was

turned into a red-letter one, for on the lower reaches of the Dee it is a rare event for anyone to take five clean spring fish in one day out of any waters lying below Banchory Bridge.

During this April I also made a very remarkable catch of a fourteen-pounder out of "The Sandy Havens" on the Kineskie water, landing my fish without a hook in him! It gave me a splendid run, and on eventually gaffing it we discovered it was not hooked at all; it had only come at the minnow in a half-hearted way, and in turning from it the lure had swung under one of the pectoral fins, while the triangle catching over the line drew a loop round the base of the fin, which had pulled so tight that it took longer to disentangle than if the hook had been in the usual place.

During November came more sport at Stoke Court with Mr. Allhusen, at Hall Barn and Burnham Beeches; also three very nice days of partridge driving with Charles Eley at East Bergholt, Edward Quilter, Berkeley Lucy, and Col. Halford making up the party, all of

whom could hold pretty straight, and we got 220 partridges, 20 pheasants, 24 hares, with some rabbits—a good bag considering 600 brace of birds had already been taken off the ground.

The first of December found me staying with Brydges Willyams at his beautiful place, Carnanton, near St. Columb, in Cornwall. His brother Arthur, Sir George Prescott, and Colonel Villiers Bagot completed the party, who in the three following days bagged 459 head, chiefly pheasants. The Carnanton pheasants do not rise exactly at one's toes, for the covers are nearly all hanging ones, and as the guns are placed in the valleys, many birds pass over the heads of the shooters actually out of reach, so that the killing of 400 pheasants here is fully equal to the sport afforded by double that quantity of birds sent to the guns without due judgment from flat covers. On the 4th our party broke up, I staying on for a few days to try the marsh belonging to Lord Falmouth, but let for many years past to my host. On the first day I took off it 5 wild ducks, 26 teal, and

Carnanton.

22 snipe, a total which will make anyone keen at marsh work long for a similar chance.

On quitting Cornwall, there came more days at Hall Barn, Balls Park, and Netherfield, till on the 25th of January I went to Charlecote Park to finish up the season with Spencer Lucy. On the 27th we went over to Ragley Hall to shoot with Lord Hertford, and on a very wet day in a very big wood nine of us got 346 head, chiefly rabbits. This day, in addition to being very wet, was also close and still and inclined to fog, and I have never before or since seen such a vivid exposition of the difference in smoke caused by black and nitro powders. At one beat I was placed between two "black men"—to the best of my recollection, Col. Drummond Murray and Col. Heywood—and the bunnies coming fast, their combined fire speedily stopped my being able to see, and a short time afterwards they themselves, so dense was the smoke, were obliged to call the "cease fire."

On the 28th, Spencer Lucy, with his brother Berkeley, Col. Paulet, C. G. Lefroy, and myself, killed

out of a nine-acre cover, *third time through*, 20 cock pheasants, 11 partridges, 11 hares, and 224 rabbits; while the next day Lucy and I had a pretty mixed bag of seven different sorts, viz., 8 wild ducks, 1 widgeon, 4 cock pheasants, 3 partridges, 7 hares, 8 rabbits, and 2 wood-pigeons.

CHAPTER VI.

1886.

THE first sport that came my way this season was enjoyed as the guest of Mr. B. Lancaster Rose at the Huntly Arms Hotel, Aboyne—an excellent house for comfort, while the daily beat told off to each angler was (and still is) a good big one, containing quite as many pools as could be comfortably fished in the day, and at certain heights of water very good sport is often to be had on this section. On this occasion, however, "she" was "a' wrang," and from April the 5th to the 14th four of us took but twelve fish, while here again the natural minnow came out best, for of the total catch, just one half fell to my rod, the other three fishers having stood by the fly. Next, from the 15th to the 21st, I stayed with Turner Farley in his

bungalow at Cairnton, some two miles above Banchory. Here, likewise, we did not do much better than at Aboyne, as six days yielded only twelve captives—four to my host's rod, four to mine, and four to that of David Rae, the fisherman—which was a poor return for this justly famed and beautiful stretch of water, which for its extent is perhaps the best reach in all Deeside, as it is "good" from the opening day of the season right up to the closing one.

August the 12th found me again at Elibank, where in ten days' shooting my host and I got 348 head, of which 324 were grouse. On the 20th of August, as the shepherd had to gather his sheep off the hill, we quitted Elibank on a trouting expedition to Loch Leven, when, on reaching Kinross that evening, we both became somewhat depressed by the numbers of other anglers staying in the hotel, for this was our first experience of this famed loch; and thus it came to pass, on the morning following our advent, we wended our way to the waterside with no great keenness.

On arriving at the pier and boat-house, from which

all anglers must start, a hearty welcome was given us by a white-haired old Scotchman, who told us all the other boats were away long since. Then conducting us to a lengthy wooden building, he booked our names and the time of our start; and that ceremony ended, he proceeded to enquire if we were in want of tackle or flies, and directing our attention to the walls of the room, there we saw hanging from nails many rows of casting lines, each ready mounted with four flies, for on Loch Leven it is the rule to use that number. As most of these casts contained one or two of the favourite flies for the loch, such as the "Zulu" and the "Hecham Pecham," we purchased plentifully, as the gut appeared good and cheap. Then we went to our boat, and to our astonishment we saw Loch Leven was anything but the small sheet of water of our imagination. Why we had pictured it as insignificant, goodness only knows, but we had so, and were agreeably disappointed at viewing a fine big piece of water, which we learnt from the guide books covered more than three thousand acres. As for the crowd of fishers,

there were but four boats in sight, the others being hidden in distant bays or by Queen Mary's Isle. On our boatmen expressing a wish "to pull west," we consented, so putting their backs into the business, we were soon three miles from the starting place; then they turned the boat broadside to the breeze, shipped their oars, and while producing their pipes the head man broke silence by saying: "Now, gentlemen, fish away, for it should be a good day."

We were both soon at work, the trout rising freely, and although we were both old hands at loch fishing, we missed hooking a good many, when in reply to an enquiry as to whether the fish were not coming very short that morning, we got for answer: "Oh, no, sir, not at all, but ye don't strike hard or sharp enough for this loch." The hint being taken, from that time on we hooked nearly every fish that rose, and it became evident Loch Leven trout were quicker in their rise and sharper in detecting the falsity of the lure than the trout of other Scotch lochs, and to make a basket the angler must strike quickly and almost roughly.

After drifting some three-quarters of a mile from the shore, the rises became few and far between ; the water looked to us too black and deep for successful fishing, but nevertheless, on hinting this, our boatmen assured us to the contrary, while puffing their 'bacca. Continuing to flog away, nothing came until we neared the shore, to which the wind was drifting us, and then as soon as we passed into shallower water the fish again commenced to rise. At the end of this long drift we landed for lunch with sixteen trout, weighing thirteen pounds, and as soon as our men were out of hearing, we resolved to make but short drifts and keep near the shore; but as this entailed harder work, against which our boatmen set their faces, we found it necessary to promise them something extra if they would work as we wished. This had the desired effect, while so well did our plan answer that on reaching the pier in the evening we had other thirty-one, or a total of forty-seven, averaging a fraction under a pound each. Delighted with our sport, we returned to our hotel with very altered ideas of Loch Leven fishing,

which we now voted to be well arranged and devoid of cockney surroundings.

Now, we had arranged to return to Elibank on a Saturday, so as to start at the grouse again on the Monday, but both of us being "bitten" by the fishing, we agreed to defer our departure till Monday, there being as usual no trains running on Sunday. Thus, when the Sabbath morning arrived, we passed the greater part of the day strolling round the loch side, where, of course, as it was not a fishing day, the trout were rising furiously. Then at the fearfully early hour of six o'clock we had to take our seats at the *table d'hôte.* This we had been most specially asked—I might almost say commanded—to do by the hotel keeper, for he let us see pretty plainly there would be "a deeficulty" in having dinner served in our own room on the Sabbath. Of course we had "white fish" (boiled haddocks), roast beef and stewed prunes, three questionable luxuries which appear to be indispensable at all Scotch *table d'hôte* dinners. The company was pleasant enough, so much so that at the

end of the repast we followed the rest into the smoking room, where naturally trouting talk was the only topic of conversation, while whiskey, hot, cold and with "sodda watter," lent embellishing aid to many of the stories.

In the assembly in which we found ourselves, three friends in particular attracted every one's attention by narratives of how they had caught heavier and larger numbers of trout than any one else; the trio were also apparently great at all athletic feats, one of them loudly relating a story of a leap so extraordinary as to call forth from a listener an exclamation of "Impossible, sir! it could not be done."

On him the teller of the story turned fiercely, retorting in angry tones, "Pray, sir, do you doubt my word?"

"Oh, no, not at all," replied the other. "I only feel sure you *must* have made a mistake in the details."

"Oh, *do* you? You little know what we can do till you see for yourself," answered the athlete, who

rose to his feet, thereby concentrating all attention on himself, while in loud tones he continued, "Look here, sir, if you would like to see an exhibition of what a really active man can do in the way of leaping, I'll bet you a couple of bottles of whiskey, to be drunk by the company present, that I'll find you a man in this very room who shall jump through the open door there and touch the top of it with his foot as he goes through and yet not fall."

Here the speaker turned to one of his friends and gave him a look which was tantamount to saying, "You can do that easily enough, can't you?"

Then resuming his speech, he wound up by saying as he banged his fist on the table—"And, by George, if he doesn't do it, he shall pay forfeit."

The sceptical gentleman at once took the bet, first stipulating it should be put down in black and white, which being duly done, it was read out to the whole company, who all declared the terms were clear and unmistakable. Now, reader, I am wondering if you have been sharper than any of us were, and so discovered the

"sell" for yourself. No sooner were these formalities completed than the layer of the bet turned to the taker, saying in a humble voice, "Very well, sir, *you do it!* My bargain was that *I* would find the man, and if *he* did not do it, *he* was to pay forfeit; if you refer to what is written, you will find me correct."

As the astonished taker of the wager grasped the situation, he held out his hand to the winner and led the laughter which went round the room, while, as the two bottles of whiskey were ordered, we beat a retreat to be ready for an early start on the morrow.

Returning south, there followed more days at Balls Park and Hall Barn, together with some few nice days at Dane End, near Ware, then rented by Mr. Cumberbatch, the present tenant of Ware Park. On the 12th of November I was one of a party of nine guns shooting Balls Park Wood, when on a dark and showery day 625 head were bagged, of which 542 were pheasants. This was followed by five days at Charlecote, and then odd days at Langley Park, Slough, and at Hall Barn, filled up the time until the 5th of December. On the morning of

that day I met Brydges Willyams, Sir George Prescott, Colonel Cornwall Legh, of High Legh, Edward Lawson and Rudolph Lehman on the Paddington platform, from whence a merry party started for Carnanton by the Cornish express. On this occasion our host tried the experiment of shooting cocks only "first time through," but it was not successful, as there was not a sufficiently long interval given to allow the birds to gather together again before we shot the same cover afresh; so consequently the size of the bag was unduly reduced.

Six days' shooting produced 720 head, of which 607 were pheasants, with 21 woodcocks. I also had one day on the marsh with the Rev. Hyde Smith, when, as bad luck would have it, his gun broke down on his firing his first shot, so, as we were nine miles from home, there was nothing for it but for me to go on alone, when six ducks, eight teal, and nineteen snipe were my reward. This breakdown was indeed a pity, for Hyde Smith could use his gun right well, and as the marsh was full of "stuff," it is probable

that with his assistance the bag would have been more than doubled.

Then came three merry happy days at Isenhurst in Sussex, with Sir George Prescott, Prescott Westcar, Colonel Villiers Bagot, and Major Tollner; while the season wound up at Tillingbourne with a good shoot with my old friend, the late George Bonnor.

1887.

From February 11th to the 26th, I stayed with the late Sir Robert Harvey at the Invercauld Arms, at Ballater, fishing the Cambus o' May water, then rented by him. This season the fish had hardly arrived in these upper reaches on the opening of the fishing, so up till the 22nd we had but three fish apiece. On that date Sir Robert went south; when, during the three days that I remained, I got nine others. Kind Sir Robert! How little I thought he carried his death warrant with him from Ballater when he said good-bye! On the Sunday after my return south, I walked over from Windsor to Langley for an afternoon chat, only to find

him very unwell; albeit he laughed as he offered me a cigar, while saying, "I'm worse than I seem, for when I cannot smoke, I'm quite certain I must be really ill." On the 13th of March typhoid fever declared itself, and then, alas! on the 28th, I with very many others paid our last respects to this great gentleman as he was borne to his resting-place in Langley Church.

This year I did not go north for the 12th of August, but commenced work on the partridges at Balls Park; and after ten days of good sport I found myself, on the 13th of September, the guest of Colonel John Hargreaves, at Glen Tromie, near Kingussie—Frank Gist, Cecil Sapte, H. I. Rawlinson, R. Austin, and E. Fiennes making up the party. On the 13th, Bob Hargreaves, aged 15, killed his first stag in Gaick Forest, which my host rented in conjunction with Glen Tromie; the forest lodge being some eight miles away, and thither two or three of us went by turns for a couple of days at a time. During the next sixteen days we bagged 11 stags, 1 roebuck, 301 grouse, 32 ptarmigan, 59 black-game, 145 partridges, 40 hares, 5 ducks, 31 snipe, 7 rabbits—643 head, a very

GAICK FOREST LODGE.

pretty bag of mixed game. One of the chief features of this visit was the fact that the thirty-two ptarmigan were all killed by driving, for, on reaching our ground on the summit of Malhuich, about eight miles from Glen Tromie, we found that the morning had changed from a warm, still one, to a very cold, windy, cloudy day, rendering the ptarmigan so wild that it was quickly clear it was of no use walking them up in line. Therefore we tried to drive them, and in this way we got sixteen brace, and from what I then saw, I am sure that these birds could be successfully driven after making a careful observation of the flights usually taken when they were disturbed.

Returning south, there followed in October three good days at Charlecote; and on the 19th, Spencer Lucy, with his brother Berkeley, George Granville, Frank Dugdale, and myself, had a good bag of 161 head, made up of 2 outlying fallow does, 47 partridges, 15 pheasants, 92 rabbits, 2 ducks, and 3 various. The next day, being *minus* Granville, but *plus* Colonel Paulet and Archie Drummond, we got 178 head, in much the same mixed proportions.

Next came a visit to George Bonnor at Tillingbourne, near Dorking, where, on November 2nd and 3rd, in company with Colonel Ellison, Sir Trevor Lawrence, F. G. Davidson, G. D. Whatman, and Captain Evelyn, we got 314 head, chiefly pheasants. The Tillingbourne property belongs to the Duke of Norfolk, and under the rule of my friend Bonnor it was certainly one of the most prettily picturesque places near London, and beautifully kept up; while to me one of its chief charms was a chain of small ponds, each of which, connected by a stream, held fine trout. At these I had many a happy summer's day, and on one occasion I was lucky enough to hook and land, on an artificial May fly and a "Governor," two trout of three and two and a half pounds. I am aware it is not usual to fish a dropper with a May fly, but having tried the big one with several other flies, I only put the May fly up for just the one cast over this special fish, and thinking the chance of getting a rise extremely remote, I was too lazy to remove the dropper. The fat fellow, on taking the May fly, naturally drew the other fly

after him under water, when the second trout dashed from beneath some weeds and seized it. That I got both fish out was a matter of luck, for I had not a net within reach, as, estimating my chance as hopeless, I had left it hanging on a gate-post near by, and thus I had first to thoroughly kill my captives prior to hand-lining them. As I finished the performance, a voice close by startled me by saying, "Well done!" and there at my elbow was standing a man, rod in hand, who bore a very pleasant countenance, while his whole manner and appearance had something distinguished about it and proclaimed the gentleman as well as the sportsman. I was somewhat puzzled as to who he could be, for my host, when I left the house in the morning, had said nothing of anyone else coming to fish. However, I at once accepted the stranger as a guest at Tillingbourne, and expressing my regret at having already fished the best of the pools, I invited him to follow me to try a cast in those that were yet untouched. The offer was courteously accepted—the stranger soon showing he was an expert with the rod.

After taking a brace of fine trout, all doubts as to whether this charming mannered man was a guest at Tillingbourne were at once dispelled when he looked smilingly at me, while saying, "Dear Bonnor told me he had put a couple of bottles of champagne in ice, so we must not keep luncheon waiting"—an announcement which, on that blazing hot June day, was not wholly unwelcome.

Now, at the entrance to Tillingbourne there was a fine marble bust of some ancient Greek hero; I forget who it represented, but around it was a long inscription in Greek characters. Now, from my earliest school-days, this was a language which had ever been a fatal one to me; and thus, in later times, I had been too happy to bury all remnants of Greek in the more congenial study of the French, German, and Italian languages. Not liking, however, to confess my ignorance, I had always hitherto passed this bust with a look which was equivalent to saying, "Of course, I know all about you, and could easily translate the rigmarole that surrounds you if I chose!" Many other fellows

TILLINGBOURNE.

likewise I noticed did the same. So when my stranger stopped in front of the Greek party to give him a name, whilst, after reading the inscription, he translated it as a matter of course, I was so struck with the performance that I remarked, "What a wonderful thing that a man of your age should recollect his school-boy's Greek as well as you do! Are you sure you are right?" A merry twinkle came to his eyes, while the next second Bonnor's pleasant voice called, from the top of the steps whither he had come to meet us, "Grimble, let me introduce you to Mr. Matthew Arnold." In a second it flashed across me I had been thus lightly talking to one who was acknowledged to be the greatest Greek scholar of the day! The deed was done, and though at first my face fell, the ludicrous side of this matter presented itself so forcibly that it was impossible to help laughing. In this the great man joined most heartily, and the matter being explained to host and hostess, they too entered into the joke, which was followed by a merry lunch.

Mr. Arnold made me quite happy later on by saying, "Well, even if I *do* know a little more about a dead

language than you do, I must own I could not have hand-lined those two trout like you did."

My next sport was again at Balls Park, where, on the 11th of November, ten of us got 600 pheasants, with a total bag of 748 head. Next, on the 2nd of December, Carnanton's hospitable roof sheltered me once more, Sir Philip Egerton, Sir George Prescott, Colonel Legh, and Humphry Willyams making up the party. In the three days following we put into the larder 514 pheasants, 11 woodcocks, 2 partridges, 17 hares, and 24 rabbits; and during one of these days Brydges Willyams shot a hen-pheasant with nearly the full dress plumage of the cock-bird. On the fourth day the party broke up, owing to a severe attack of gout having laid our good host by the heels. I was, however, kindly pressed to stay on to try the marsh with his nephew Humphrey, and in the next five days we two managed to put together the pretty bag of 3 duck, 3 widgeon, 36 teal, 89 snipe, 31 pheasants, 59 partridges, 2 hares, and 2 rabbits.

This marsh has quite an historical interest, for during

the last two thousand years almost every foot of the large acreage has been dug up for "tin streaming" purposes. The Phœnicians, the ancient Britons, and the Romans worked on it, and to this day the industry is still carried on, the incessant digging having rendered some parts such very treacherous walking that the most practised bog-trotter could hardly venture for the first few times without a guide. Every dangerous hole in it is, however, well known to old Tullum and his son, and the visitor placing himself in the hands of either can "go forth" fearlessly. The old man is of extraordinary build and strength, and in his younger days was one of the most redoubtable among the many formidable wrestlers of Cornwall.

The 11th of January saw me at Charlecote, Lord Yarmouth and Campbell Preston completing the party. In the evening of that day we went in force to the Warwick Hunt Ball. On the next one I did some ferreting alone, the rest of the party taking a late sleep, and preparing to receive the Duchess of Teck and Princess Victoria, who were coming over to tea from Warwick

Castle. On getting back with nearly a hundred bunnies, I quickly changed and joined the tea party, when I learned that, owing to the dense fog, Lord Brooke, to make all safe for the Duchess, had ridden the whole way in front of her carriage with a white handkerchief pinned to his back, as a guide to the coachman. I also had the luck on this occasion to make the acquaintance of the late Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury, for to my lot it fell to escort her over Charlecote House, and much amused I was at many of her quaint remarks, made in her well-known deep contralto voice. In the evening we had another dance at Warwick Castle—one of the prettiest sights I ever saw. On the next morning *most* of us appeared at a nine o'clock breakfast, and a good day's sport was followed by the Stratford-on-Avon Ball. But these three consecutive dances so took it out of two of our guns that we were quite short-handed for the next day's partridge driving, and of course the birds took that opportunity of coming well to the hedges we lined. However, we got 40 brace, and should have had fully 60 if our two beaten friends had put in an appearance.

CHAPTER VII.

1888.

The 12th of August, this year, saw me the guest of Frank Lawson at Huntly Lodge, Aboyne, Hal Phillips and Cecil Block making up the four guns. The twelfth was windy, cold, and showery. Phillips and Block shot together, while Lawson and I worked another beat. Honours were nearly divided, with a bag of 200 grouse, 4 hares, and a duck. In the eight days at Huntly Lodge we got 738 grouse, 46 hares, 4 woodcock, 59 rabbits, and 2 ducks, while on the off days I took 6 salmon, and Block 2 others. The year following disease visited these shootings so severely that even up to the present day they do not appear to have recovered from the attack.

Following this came my usual stay at Balls Park, where they were still making hay on the 13th of

September, on account of the very wet season; and then, on October 13th, I was again the guest of Frank Lawson at Langley Park, near Norwich, Sir Philip Egerton and Jack Bloxam making up the four. The three following days gave us 226 head, chiefly partridges.

On October 17th I had two days at Tillingbourne, meeting there Colonel Ellison, Augustus Chetwode, Lewis Coward, and F. G. Davidson, when we got 283 pheasants and some "odds and ends." Then, on the 23rd, 24th and 25th, came three sporting days at Charlecote, the first in particular being a good one, for, with our host, his brother Berkeley, Christopher Tower, and Frank Dugdale, we killed, walking in line, 36 partridges, 49 hares, 177 rabbits, and 7 various.

As this day came to an end, and as we turned on to the road for home, we met Sir Charles Mordaunt's stud groom coming back from Warwick, and as both Berkeley Lucy and I had backed Veracity for a small sum for the Cambridgeshire, we cried after him to know if he had heard the name of the winner. "Frosty, sir," came the

CHARLECOTE.

reply ; and frosted were we, to be thawed, however, later on, by hearing that Veracity had won, and that "Frosty" was but a special pronunciation of the groom's own devising.

On the 22nd November came another of the annual big days at Balls Park, where I found assembled Hal Phillips, Charles Wodehouse, Mr. Monck (the late M.P. for Gloucester), General Sir Charles Reid, Harold Finch Hatton, George Bonnor, Sir George Prescott, and Brydges Willyams. The total bag was 1054, of which 703 were pheasants. During this day an extraordinary bit of luck came my way. Up to lunch time we had had first-rate sport, so much so that I had got rid of over three hundred cartridges. On resuming work, I found my reserve ammunition had in some way missed the cartridge cart, so therefore I was quite cleared out. Sir George Prescott kindly lent me a box of one hundred to go on with. At this moment my host came up to whisper to me that he feared one or two of his guests had not had quite their share of sport, so would I mind taking a stand in the ensuing beat which at the best would yield

but a few shots. Cheerfully consenting, he placed me himself in a spot to which we both knew pheasants rarely broke. The beat began, while, quite contented, I stood watching the birds running past me up to the forward guns. I was in an open space in which, on either side, some forty yards away, big oak-trees shut me out from the guns standing to right and left. The beaters drew level, and had well passed me, when, of a sudden, all the birds in the beat began to fly back over my head and directly between the two trees. I had a right good loader, so at them we went with a will, and in less than ten minutes my hundred cartridges had been blazed away, while hardly any one else fired a shot. This was "taking a back seat" with a vengeance, and I could not help feeling rather shy about the matter; as, however, the birds were all flying back to a part of the wood already beaten, where they would have been seen no more that day, I did not mind very much. My loader said I got seventy-four, and only two short of that number was gathered, but the firing was so fast, I had no idea myself what the score was.

When the beat ended, it turned out that a stop, who should have kept hidden in a ditch *outside* the cover, had left his place to take up a position *inside* it, so that every bird, seeing him as it ran to the end, had thus been most unexpectedly headed back to me. It is impossible to speak of these days in Balls Wood without singing the praises of Matthews, the head keeper, for of this oblong wood of nearly two hundred acres, but three sides belong to the estate, while the whole length of the fourth and longest side runs parallel with a public highway, on the other side of which are extensive covers not over carefully preserved. From this description any pheasant preserver will see that it is only by never-failing vigilance that the birds can be held together in such good numbers.

On the 7th and 8th of December, Hall Barn gave six of us 406 head, nearly all pheasants; and then on the 11th I revisited Langley Park, Norwich, which is not to be mixed up with Sir Robert Harvey's Langley Park, near Slough.

My host, Frank Lawson, apologised for asking us to shoot covers "a second time through," but, as will be seen, this was quite unnecessary, as in four days our party of Sir George Prescott, Prescott Westcar, Colonel Villiers Bagot, Colonel Keene, and Cecil Block garnered 1602 head, of which 1312 were pheasants. Hamond, the head keeper at Langley, understood right well how to make his birds fly high over the guns, and this though the most of the covers were quite flat. In the Park none of them had any outside fence or hedge and were merely wired off, while in all these covers the undergrowth was cut back for about a hundred yards, and the guns being placed nearly a like distance from the fence, the pheasants, being able both to see and hear them, naturally ceased to run forward as soon as they were deprived of the shelter of the undergrowth; then, as the beaters drew near, they would fly up through the trees, and thus passed high over the shooters, and that they did this to some purpose will be admitted when it is stated that at one stand, out of some 400 birds sent over six guns, but 120 were laid low.

1889.

February 5th found me fishing the Tay from the Grandtully Hotel, where, in six days of hard work, but two fish rewarded my efforts, 25 and 18 pounds. Then came a very severe gale, with one of the heaviest snowstorms seen in that district for many years; these inflictions being followed by a great frost, drove me south for a while, to reappear on the Huntly Lodge water of the Dee, which I rented from the 18th March to 30th April. During that time I passed forty days on the river side, and "wrought sair hard" the whole time. Twenty-two days were absolutely blank, while the remaining nineteen gave but twenty-six fish, weighing 302 lbs.—poor sport indeed, especially at the price paid for it, which I will not mention.

On August the 11th, Raehills received me once more within its hospitable walls, Captain Ernest Nevile being the other guest, until we were joined by Markham Spofforth and his retriever, bearing the odd name of "Euba Dam." However, he was a good dog, and

always took all the grouse he could collect to his master's butt, so his name mattered but little. Our score for nineteen days was 382 grouse, 34 black-cocks, 103 partridges, 19 snipes, 12 hares, 7 rabbits, 5 various, and 2 fallow bucks. This was a bad grouse season in these parts, disease having done its deadly work but too well.

I cannot mention the name of the late Captain Nevile without relating an incident that had happened to us in Paris some years earlier. Together we had made a little expedition to that gay capital, to see Doncaster win the Grand Prix, poor Nevile taking the opportunity to have a small plunge on the English horse, which was easily beaten by the French Boiard. To console ourselves, we went in the evening to the Mabille, when, as Nevile was sitting looking somewhat depressed, he was espied by four young Frenchmen, who, though they were strangers to us, had no sooner set eyes on my dejected friend than, guessing the cause, they formed themselves into a ring and, linking arms, began to dance round him while chanting: "Boiard a gagné! Boiard a

gagné!" For a few seconds Nevile gave no sign, then, taking his cigar from his lips, he looked them straight in the face while he ripped out with sharp decisive accent, "Eh bien, messieurs! et les Prussiens aussi." This was indeed a dangerous reply, for it was but the second Grand Prix that had been run since the Prussians quitted Paris, and the next minute we found ourselves involved in a free fight. Our own friends, with all the other English in the place, rallied round us, when, though outnumbered, we had by no means the worst of the *melée*, as the police arrived on the scene to part the combatants.

One of the features of Raehills sport was just one day at the stooks—not perhaps the most exciting method of shooting grouse, and more often than not the outcome of a double desire to pass time on a wet day (the best for the purpose) and please the farmers whose stooks are suffering. A high-lying cornfield on the edge of the moor must be the scene of operations, where it is quite good time to arrive by one o'clock in the afternoon. Seats are then made behind the stone wall of the field,

and placed so that their occupants cannot shoot each other. Usually a stone is pulled from the top of the dyke, and then placing some bracken or a sheaf of corn on it, with a game bag over all, a dry and easy seat to shoot from is made, but it must be built of such a height as not to show the shooter's cap over the top of the wall. Places having been arranged, each gun takes a seat, one keeper withdrawing to a distance behind the cornfield, while, if there is a second man out, he proceeds to conceal himself on the other side of the stubble; by which distribution of forces, as birds settle near either of them, they can frequently be moved back over the heads of the guns.

For the first half hour the weapon will probably lie across the knees while a pipe is smoked, when, as a matter of course, the very moment attention is relaxed, a covey will come over the wall, to pass by unshot at. Annoyed at losing such a chance, the culprit now continues to sit at the ready, until suddenly a gentle rushing sound strikes his ear, and the next moment finds himself literally smothered in a great pack of

grouse skimming over the wall barely a foot from his head. It is easy enough to take a brace out of this lot, for they are slowing in their flight preparatory to settling on the stubble, while so keen are they on their repast that often even after two or more barrels have been fired they will yet alight, and then, fluttering up on to the stooks, will commence to feed. When this is done out of gunshot, the keeper on that side of the field will quit his hiding-place to stroll gently towards the birds, who, when disturbed, usually return to the moor by the way they came. This time, however, there will be more satisfaction in getting a right and left, for they are now driven birds coming best pace, while often rising very high.

Thus for two or three hours they will come to the corn in twos and threes, and in coveys and packs, till eventually the shooting scares them so much that they begin to hesitate about returning, and instead of coming boldly over the wall, they stop short and light on the heather. Then it is indeed a pretty sight to peep through the chinks in the wall and watch the movements of a big

pack at quite close quarters. Clearly they are holding a consultation as to the wisdom of again seeking the tempting food, but if absolute stillness be maintained, the corn will usually win the day, for presently the old cocks begin to strut, while jerking their heads up and down and giving a low sort of chuckle, calling all the others to attention, till at length every head is erect, when with one accord they rise to cross once more the fatal dyke. When once seated at this sport, no one should on any pretence quit his place or stand upright, and all winged birds should be stopped by another shot. Mark where each one falls, and look them over now and again, for one that is only winged will drop and lie for a considerable time to all appearance dead, before sneaking off to hide under the nearest stook; and even though it has been seen to do this, yet one stook is so exactly like another that it will be difficult to remember the right one after the lapse of an hour.

The 18th of September saw me again at Glen Tromie, Frank Gist, Cecil Sapte, Pocklington, Charles Greenfield and Sclater Booth making up the party. It was but a

moderate grouse season here, and in the seventeen days that followed, most of which were very windy and snowy, we got 14 stags, 268 grouse, 17 black-cocks, 23 partridges, 8 snipe, 2 teal, 2 woodcock, and 9 hares.

On the last day of my stay I had a real good day on the hill, for on the 5th October I started with Edmund Ormiston from Gaick Lodge, on as fine a day for the purpose as could have been wished. At a quiet pace we made our way to the hill-top, where we at once found deer, for near at hand five stags and some hinds were feeding. The stalk proved an easy one, and the best stag, a fat eight-pointer, bit the dust. Edmund performed the gralloch whilst I, having taken a seat, pulled out the spy-glass and soon found a solitary stag trotting slowly into sight, he having evidently been disturbed by the sound of the recent shot, although not quite sure from which direction the noise had come; and as I pointed him out to Edmund, still busy with his work, he whispered to me: "Have a try for him, sir, while I finish the gralloch; it's a sharp run, but if you can reach the big stane yonder

before he does, you will cut him off, for that will be his line, and I'm thinking you will get there in time."

The aforesaid "stane" was about a mile in front of the stag, but much nearer to me than to him, so taking my bearings I dashed off best pace. It was a down-hill run, the ground completely hid me, and reaching the indicated spot, puffing and blowing like a grampus, I just had time to settle myself in a happy position to await the issue of Edmund's prophecy. The matter was quickly settled, as I soon saw the stag trotting exactly in the line foretold, when, as he came broadside to me, I rolled him over stone dead; then running up, I bled him and awaited the advent of Edmund the prophet, who shortly put in an appearance, the while smiling proudly at the success of his strategy, although he was polite enough to declare all his pleasure was derived solely from witnessing my part of the performance. Then we started once more in quest of yet a third shot, and luck favouring us, the chance was quickly found, when once more the bullet sped true.

Now, though it has taken but a short space to narrate the death of these three stags, it must not be overlooked we had had two stalks, a run in, and three beasts to gralloch, so by this time it was past two o'clock. Edmund, however, was downright blood-thirsty that day, for, as we finished a hasty lunch, he sprang to his feet, saying, "Well, sir, all last season no one rifle could get more than three beasts in the day to himself, but I think we shall manage to beat that to-day, so we will start whenever you are ready."

Nothing loath, I was on my legs at once, but in vain corrie after corrie was searched, for not another beast could we find, while by half-past four we had explored the whole of our beat and were reduced to turning back. At this Edmund was quite depressed and down-hearted, in which feeling I could not bring myself to join, for three good stags in one day was quite sufficient sport to send me home rejoicing. Thus it was then that, as we turned our faces towards the Lodge, Edmund began to spy afresh in all directions; but his trouble was in

vain, and we at length reached the edge of the range of the forest hills.

From where we stood we could see the Lodge some 3000 feet below us, a mere speck in the distance, while so pretty and peaceful was the panorama stretched at our feet that, being tempted to rest before commencing the long descent, so tiring to the knees, we sat down by a spring and lit our pipes. On this Edmund again pulled out his spy-glass and in silence commenced another search; after some minutes I saw him give a start, and all feelings of fatigue left me as he murmured, "May be, sir, we shall get a fourth beast, for I see a small stag feeding into sight on the top of the Eilig burn, though I doubt if the daylight will last us." I took the glass from his hand and soon found the staggie, which was such a small beastie that I immediately began to consider whether, after the good day we already had had, it would not be more sportsmanlike to leave him in peace. On imparting these sentiments to Edmund, I found he had set his heart on making up the four beasts, while he also

assured me the stag was heavier in body than his horns indicated; on hearing this, I took a fresh peep at him, when to my surprise I saw him make a sudden bolt in evident alarm, while over the sky-line in furious pursuit there appeared a splendid stag with a grand head.

Nearly certain I could count royal points, I was about to proclaim my discovery to Edmund, when it flashed across me how pressed we were for time, and as with all his skill he was yet a very excitable man, I feared it might make him rash if he suddenly heard of the presence of such a noble beast, especially in the bloodthirsty frame of mind in which he then was; so, keeping my mouth shut, I quietly handed back his glass, while remarking unconcernedly, "Well, Edmund, if you want to get up to him in time to see to shoot, we must just make a run for it, so go ahead as fast as you like." Go ahead indeed he did, but as it was down hill for a mile I managed to live with him till the ascent began, when Edmund, like a gentleman, made the pace less severe, while,

as we approached the top of the hill over which we expected to find our quarry, he had the wisdom to reduce it to almost a crawl, so thus by the time the summit was reached I had quite recovered my wind.

On hands and knees we crossed the sky-line, while yard by yard the precipitous sides of the Eilig burn were searched, and horribly disappointed were we at finding our deer had apparently fed down to the foot of this very steep hill. A worse place for a shot could not be imagined, and Edmund whispered me that the last three stags killed here had all been smashed to bits by rolling down the rocky hillside after receiving the bullet.

There was nothing for it but to follow our quarry, so feet first and flat on our sides we commenced the descent, only quickly to sight the back of a small stag. As long as he fed we slithered nearer to him; the moment he raised his head we became as immovable as the big stones around us. At length we were within a long shot of this staggie, while to my dismay nothing of the big fellow could be seen, and it

became uncertain as to whether the object of our pursuit was right at the bottom of the hill, or only hidden from view by a projecting spur of rock.

Just out of fun, with no intention of firing, I put the rifle to my shoulder, when to my surprise Edmund's long arm glided gently round me and depressed the muzzle to the earth, while a hurried whisper came to my ear, "There is another one just a wee bit better."

Now, as I also knew there was another and a very much better one, I chuckled to myself at the thought of the surprise it would be to Edmund if we succeeded in killing the big one. The situation was, however, getting critical, necessitating some decided move on our part; for it was growing so rapidly dusk that, unless the small stag would kindly move out of the way, it would be impossible to make a further advance without letting him into the secret of our presence, in which event he would be certain to impart his discovery to all his friends below. For some precious minutes we remained immovable, while hoping the little brute would take himself

off, but he continued placidly browsing, while each mouthful he took was accompanied on our parts by anything but blessings on his head. Dusker and dusker it grew, and matters began to look very black; so much so that I contemplated telling Edmund all about the big fellow, with a view of taking counsel and attempting same rash or daring manœuvre.

My own idea was to put the rifle at full cock, and then, with fingers fast set between hammers and strikers, to make a dash down hill, trusting to luck to get near enough to the big one to put in a shot ere he could get out of range. As I turned to whisper my plans, I saw two other good-sized stags coming up from the base of the hill to join the little one. Edmund had of course seen them too, and whispered me in accents of despair, "Hech, sir, if it were but later in the season, the other stag would soon put them awa, and show us his whereabouts." As he finished speaking, the two new-comers came to a halt, while the provoking little staggie that had so long delayed our advance disappeared with a caper; then the next second we heard the clatter,

the thud, and the rush of a heavy beast in his gallop, accompanied by snorts of rage and defiance, quickly causing the other two stags to bolt. It was clear the sounds we heard came from behind the projecting rock, so now our anxiety was as to whether the approaching stag would continue the pursuit of the intruders sufficiently far to bring him into our sight.

It was clear that, if he did put in an appearance, we should be absolutely in full view of each other ; therefore the full-cocked rifle was already half way to my shoulder, as, after a few seconds of suspense, he bounded into sight some hundred yards below.

He came thundering along, fairly broadside on, and, excited as I was, it was yet impossible to help admiring the spectacle, for though we were as motionless as the rocks around us, yet he "picked us up" in an instant, bringing himself to a sudden halt by planting his fore-legs stiff and wide apart in front of him, at the same time turning his head directly on us. It needed no second glance to show me we were detected, and that this halt was but preparatory to bolting down hill and

so unsighting us. Alas! for him that second of hesitation was his death warrant, for the rifle spoke in the very nick of time, the bullet dropping him to all appearance stone dead. Quickly lowering the hammer of the left barrel to put on the stop, with lengthy leaps we dashed down hill to where he lay, only to reach him just as the sinewy hind-legs began to kick in vigorous convulsions. On to one of them Edmund flung himself, while I, seizing his horns, fixed his head to the earth; so thus between us we held him till the knife could be unsheathed and used.

A few minutes later the gallant stag lay prone on the now nearly dark hillside, and it was only then that we began to realise the good luck that had befallen us, for at our feet was a splendid thirteen-pointer, which next day scaled quite clean just under seventeen stone. Then it was that I turned to Edmund to say, "Well, now, what do you think of my little stag? I saw him when you asked me to take a look at the small one, but I kept it dark to give you a surprise."

To this came the reply: "Hech, sir, but it's the verra same beast I was hoping to get you a shot at. You see, sir, it was like this: I hae so often seen the sicht o' such a gran fellow mak my gentleman all o'er of a tremble that I just telled ye it was but a staggie we were after; but surely, sir, ye did not see him too, for he went out of sicht before I gave you my glass."

To this I answered: "Yes, Edmund, but he came back again, and so I kept the matter dark, for I too have sometimes seen the sight of such a splendid stag make the best of stalkers rash, especially when he had to do his work against time; so we can laugh at each other and cry quits over our thirteen-pointer; so now for a taste of Glenlivet before we drag him down hill."

It took us a good hour to haul our prize to the pony, but, though aching arms and want of breath more than once compelled a halt, all troubles were laughed at, as we now cared not a jot how late we might be in reaching home.

The shot had indeed been a lucky one, for on examination we found the ball had gone high and smashed the spine just over the heart, and two inches higher would have made it a miss altogether; moreover, it was almost the only wound that would have assured a few moments of absolute immobility, for, had the bullet been planted fairly in the heart, the chances are the stag would have run at least a few paces, and then, as he tottered to his death, his fall would have launched him rolling down hill, to be dashed to pieces like his predecessors.

Our luck had also been the greater, as it is but seldom stags notice each other quite so early in the season, for, as a rule, their jealousies do not commence until a week later. At the foot of the Eilig burn we were met by the pony-man, so with the help of three pair of hands our quarry was quickly strapped on the saddle, when a merry party stumbled home in the dark. On the way I confided to Edmund that, though I had killed many deer, including several royals, yet till now the twelve points had never been exceeded, and that I was under a solemn vow,

EDMUND ORMISTON AND COLONEL HARGREAVES.

the first time I broke the spell by killing a stag with more than a dozen points, to present the stalker with a bottle of whisky for each point, and having asked him what particular brand of mountain dew was his own special weakness, I got for answer, "Thank you kindly, sir; it will be seven-year-old Glenleevit that I'll be taking."

The head of this stag now hangs over my dining-room mantel-piece, and I never look at it without recalling to mind that exciting stalk, together with the many happy days I passed at Gaick as the guest of one of the best of sportsmen and good fellows.

The day following this exploit was Sunday, and I am here about to relate a small adventure which did *not* happen at Gaick, as I consider it would be a breach of faith to give the name of my host and the friendly minister; the incident, however, took place on "The Sawbeth," but not in Inverness-shire.

As this day passed somewhat slowly in a forest lodge, and as I had no letters to write, as soon as a late breakfast was over, I strolled off to the loch side to enjoy the sunny landscape while rejoicing in

the mere fact of being alive and in possession of my senses, each one of which was gratified this lovely morning—the sight by the beauties of Nature spread around me and the blue smoke as it curled from my pipe; the hearing by the croaking of a raven in the distance, mingled with the cackling of the old cock grouse as they rose from the heather in front of me; the taste by fragrant tobacco; the smell by that indescribably refreshing scent of peat, moss and heather; the feeling by the pleasant sensation of breathing fine air, when walking in robust health over ground as soft as velvet to the tread.

As the end of the loch was neared, it brought me close to the rough roadside, where I met the "Meenister," seated by his man in a two-wheeled buggy. The reverend gentleman pulled up to converse with me, and as I noticed the dimensions of his conveyance, all fear of being offered a lift to the Kirk was dispelled, for I was aware he was on his way to hold a service at the head of the glen. Now, lest from this my readers may put me down as a heathen,

it must be stated the aforesaid service was to be a Gaelic one. But thrice only have I attempted to worship in that language, when the pronunciation and intonation of the unknown tongue so reminded me on each occasion of my friend, that famous Tweed fisherman, the late Thomas Tod Stoddart, and *his* Gaelic sermon, that I never could resist the spirit of laughter the reminiscence called up, for Mr. Stoddart, though acquainted with but a few words of the language, had a knack of so imitating a Gaelic "discoorse" which was so realistic and withal so comical that it never failed to convulse his hearers with laughter.

To return, however, to our minister, who, having heard the story of the thirteen-pointer, drove off to his duties with a promise of venison if he would call at the Lodge on his way home, for our host had told us to offer him some if any of us met him. He continued his way, while I went mine, when, arriving at the end of the loch, I followed on down the banks of the stream running out of it, which some ten miles away lost itself in the larger waters of a noted salmon river,

and during the autumn numbers of these fish came up into the loch to spawn.

For more than a mile I wandered on in the same happy spirit of contentment, when suddenly all feelings of that sort were scattered to the winds by the sight of a fine bright salmon leaping high into the air. I sat down on the bank of the pool to watch, when again and again he came to the surface—a twenty-pounder I was well-nigh sure, for at times he sprang far out of water to show his goodly proportions, though more often he sent those great oily swirls around him as he made those quiet head and tail rises which are maddening for a fisherman to witness unless with rod in hand.

"Bother it," said I to myself, "he would be absolutely certain to take the very first fly that came over him." Then, dear reader, with sorrow I confess it, there entered my head the wicked idea of having a try for him that very afternoon; thus, although it was the Sabbath, I jumped to my feet and hastened home, bent on putting my profane thought into

immediate practice. After hurrying over lunch, I stole off to the gun-room, where I knew there hung a four-jointed trout rod, which, when tied together, each joint being separated by about a foot of string, I was glad to find would hang round my neck, two on each side of me, without showing below the skirts of a long mackintosh coat. A short gaff being stowed away up one of the sleeves, with fly-book and reel in pocket, I hastened back to the river, taking care that my departure was unseen; and, though it was hot work walking in the waterproof coat, it did not take me long to reach my destination.

Though the pool was only some three hundred yards distant from the roadside, it was yet quite hidden from view by high banks, but, nevertheless, taking a careful look round to make all sure, and having satisfied myself no one was in sight, I plunged down the brae, and a short time afterwards a small "Jock Scott," mounted on a yard of stout salmon gut, was hanging from the end of the rod.

Having left the gut to soak for a few minutes, I

then began to cast, when, just as anticipated, the fish took the fly greedily the moment it came over him. Then the fun began, while all thought of the Sabbath was forgotten. With a great dash the fish left the pool to make down stream, and although he went faster than was pleasant, as the going was good, I managed to keep pretty level with him.

After a run of about two hundred yards we came to another pool, and as it, too, was also well hidden from view of the road, I was pleased when my captive showed a disposition to halt; and then after his fit of the sulks was over he began to "jigger," swim round and round, spring out of the water, and try all the various dodges known to salmon to extricate themselves from difficulties. In this manner the best part of half an hour passed away, when he began to weaken, and if I had had but a lengthier gaff or a stouter rod, the contest would now have been speedily ended, but it is a very difficult matter with a ten-foot trout rod to bring a not quite exhausted fish up to within striking distance of a short gaff. At last I

made a try, but only to miss him, while, as I did so, I was electrified by a voice at my elbow saying—

"Steady! steady, my dear sir, or you will lose him; now just gie me the cleek," and, suiting the action to the word, the minister—for it was no less a personage, and I should have as soon expected to see Old Nick himself—had the fish cleverly ashore in a second. As I exclaimed, "Well done, sir!" the good man looked half ashamed, and smiled bashfully as he responded, "Aweel, Mr. 'Grumble'"—I am always called "Grumble" in the north—"it would indeed be a pity to lose so bonnie a fush, but I shall be obleeged to ye if ye will not mention my interfeerence in the matter."

Needless to say, I gave the promise, and how that fish was caught or by whom it was gaffed has ever remained a mystery, for on reaching home unperceived in the dusk, I took my prize to my bedroom, wrapped it up in a clean towel, locked it up in a portmanteau, and then in the dead of night, when the household was snoring, I carried it on tiptoe to the larder, where it was quietly deposited.

The appearance of the minister on the scene was accounted for by his having seen the top of the rod flashing in the sunlight above the bank, and being alone on the return journey, having given his man leave to stay the rest of the day with some relations, he had left his trap on the roadside, well aware the old horse would stand still for ever, to come post-haste, full of righteous indignation, to discover which of his parishioners was desecrating the Sabbath, when, finding it was only a heathen Sassenach at work, he allowed his sporting instincts to overcome his religious feelings.

Thus ended my first and last Sunday fishing in Scotland. To those who do not fish it may seem surprising that I risked damnation for a paltry twenty-pounder; to those who do fish it may perhaps seem equally odd that other Sundays were not devoted to the same sport. Thus, as there is no just pleasing every one, I hope that both fisher and non-fisher will forgive me for a first offence.

During this visit to Gaick I had the additional

pleasure of making the acquaintance of Mr. Archibald Thorburn, who came to stay a few days on purpose to study ptarmigan for the late Lord Lilford's book of British Birds. As he then was not so celebrated as at present, I was fortunate enough to secure his services for the illustrations of my book of "Shooting and Salmon Fishing," while later on he also drew for my "Highland Sport" and "The Deer Forests of Scotland." The original drawings of the two first-named books are in the possession of my friend Charles Baily, of Brighton, while those of the last-mentioned volume are safely housed in Mr. Charles Rudd's newly-built house of Ardnamurchan, in Argylshire; and I do not think that there exists a prettier series of twenty-four drawings of sport with rifle, rod and gun than these are.

As, during the period of Thorburn's stay at Gaick, it so happened that our host was away on a visit, and thus to my lot it chiefly fell to pilot the artist into the wildest and most beautiful bits of ptarmigan ground in the forest, and on departing he gave me, as

a souvenir of his visit, a very charming little water-colour drawing of a fine old cock grouse sitting on a rock, with some hinds and a stag in the distance, which is now one of the chief ornaments of my Game Book.

Returning south, there came some more days at Tillingbourne, Hall Barn, and Charlecote, and on the 21st November I arrived again at Balls Park, in company with my brother-in-law, Lord Erskine, the party getting the next day 701 head, chiefly pheasants.

On the 25th I was off to Midhurst, to stay at the hotel there with Frank Lawson, who had rented the late Lord Egmont's pheasant shooting at Cowdray Park for the rest of the season. Right comfortable quarters were to be found in that hotel, a favourite one to visitors to Goodwood. F. Morrice, Sir John Kelk, John Foster and his son were the party, the bag for the next three days being 839 pheasants, 14 woodcock, 9 hares, 45 rabbits. The pheasant shooting here is certainly some of the prettiest in the kingdom, for the scenery is beautiful, and, as many of the covers are on hillsides, the birds came very high; while Norman,

A Sketch by Archibald Thorburn.

the head keeper, has a perfect knowledge of his business, with a fine staff of assistants and beaters to help him.

On December 19th and 20th I had other two days at Cowdray, Sir George Prescott, Sir Philip Egerton, Colonel Legh, and Algernon Turner completing the party. Both days were wet and windy, but we got 533 pheasants on the first one, and 183 cocks on the next, with 10 woodcocks. Then, in January, 1890, came more days at Cowdray, Colonel Legh, Nicol of Ballogie, and Cecil Block helping; and, though the season was coming to an end, we got 445 cock pheasants, which made the 4000 birds that Lord Egmont had said could be killed. I am not aware of the total acreage of cover on the Cowdray property; suffice it to say, there are seventeen days of cover shooting "first time through," which is not often surpassed.

The 28th and 29th January found me at Charlecote, where on the 30th and 31st Spencer and Berkeley Lucy, Colonel Paulet, Smith-Rylands, Lord Garrioch, and myself shot with Louis Greville at Warwick Castle. During the first two days at Charlecote we drove

partridges, when I was somewhat taken aback by Lucy asking me to shoot cocks only! At the first it seemed almost an impossibility. However, on learning from the other guests that "the Squire" usually tried this plan for the last few days of the season, I said I would do my best; and any one will soon find, if all thought of making a right and left is discarded, that the matter is by no means a difficult one to accomplish, for, when the light is good, with the hedges high enough to allow the shooter to stand well back and thus enable him to see the birds in front of him, the horse-shoe of the cock shows out very clearly. Half-a-dozen good shots working in this style during the last few days of the season will be doing no slight service to that ground, as cock partridges are ever too numerous, for the old ones will not permit younger ones to nest anywhere near them.

CHAPTER VIII.

1890.

From the 18th March to the 2nd April I was the guest of Charles Baily, at Aberlour, on the Spey, from whence we fished the Wester Elchies water, which he had rented for the spring. A fine stretch this, though like all the rest of the Spey, but poorly stocked. Here again the little minnow showed the way, for, during the twelve days I used it, twelve salmon and forty-six kelts yielded to its fascinations. In the same time Baily, with old Cruickshank—"the king of the Spey"—both using fly, only got four salmon and fourteen kelts between them. Not going north for the 12th of August, I opened the season as usual on the 1st of September at Balls Park, where in ten days four of us got 440 partridges, with some hares and rabbits.

Next starting for Glen Tromie, I arrived there on the 16th, to stay till 6th of October; Frank and Bob Hargreaves, Frank Gist, Charles Greenfield, Shaw-Kennedy, were also of the party. During this visit there were some very pleasant days of joint grouse driving with the late Mr. Heywood Lonsdale, the master of the Shropshire, who rented Invereshie. Our kill for the time I was there was 14 stags, 394 grouse, with the usual variety of other game. During the first three days of October it rained nearly incessantly, the Tromie becoming so flooded as to resemble a big roaring river, as may be imagined when in one day, in less than five hours, it rose over eight feet. My host and I being at Glen Tromie during these wet days, we had a try for some of the very large trout which quit Loch Insh to spawn in this tributary of the Spey. Attacking them for a few hours at a time on the 1st and 2nd of October, we took altogether eleven brown trout, weighing 44 lbs., the two heaviest being $6\frac{3}{4}$ and $6\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. Of these whoppers there is a large supply in Loch Insh, but from early spring to the

end of October they are absolutely untakeable by any lure whatsoever; matters are changed only when the first August floods come down the Feshie and the Tromie, inducing them to quit Loch Insh in search of spawning places in these two streams, when they will dash fearlessly at a small phantom minnow.

On October 7th I arrived at Aikenway, by Craigellachie, on a visit to Willie Menzies of Culdares; Charles Pelham Burn from Pitcroy was also there, our fourth rod being our hostess, the best lady fisher I ever saw, and an excellent exponent moreover of the Spey cast. In seven days of hard work we took but fifteen fish between us, none of which were large ones, a truly disappointing result for the last week of the Spey season. The remarks in my diary are: "Hardly a fish to be seen in the whole water; each season the river gets worse and worse, and the poor old Spey has gone to pot."

On the 5th and 6th of November came two nice days at Tillingbourne, where I met Henry Perkins, the late Secretary of Lord's, Charles Baily, Sir Trevor

Lawrence, Welbore Ellis, and Charles Fuller. On returning to town on the 7th, I was greatly distressed to hear my old friend Spencer Lucy had died on the previous day, while I was shooting pheasants, totally ignorant that he was so much as ailing, pneumonia having carried him off in three days while on a visit to Christopher Tower at Weald Hall, Brentwood. On the 11th I, with very many others, was present at his interment in the Charlecote vault. The Squire's old mare "Maggie," who had carried him so often and so faultlessly over the hills of Corrour during many seasons of deer-stalking, drew him to his last resting-place, and the faithful creature quite seemed to know what had happened, for I never saw an animal look more dejectedly downcast.

Then came days at Balls Park and Hall Barn, with one at Wotton with Mr. Evelyn and another at Mapleton with Henry Faudel Phillips. On the 16th, 17th and 18th we had an extra good "go" at Hall Barn, the guns being Willie Lawson, Brydges Willyams, Count Münster, the late Sir John Astley, Portman Dalton and

T. D. Croft. The two days gave us 951 head, of which 842 were pheasants. To me, however, the chief feature of the visit was the brilliant display of "crackers" let off by "The Mate" and Portman Dalton, who between them kept us each day after dinner in one continual roar of laughter. One of the features of a day's partridge shooting at Hall Barn is the luncheon cart, an invention of Sir Edward's. It started in life as an Irish car, and has been developed into something very much better. It holds lunch and all accessories, has an ice well, two seats, two benches, each of which takes to pieces and packs into the car. When in use, the usual seats are the buffets, the boards on either side on which the feet ought to rest serve the purposes of tables, at which the benches enable the shooters to sit and eat in comfort.

On the 18th and 19th I shot with the late A. Hamilton Bruce, of Falkland Palace, at North Mymms Park, near Hatfield, the others of the party being the Hon. R. Villiers, Hon. F. W. Anson, George Faudel Phillips, Colonel Fellowes, Colonel Rogers,

R. T. Ellison, and Captain Levita. It snowed hard each of these days, and the bag came to but 358 head, which in better weather would have been doubled. This frost, commencing on the 16th of December, lasted until the end of the shooting season, and as in most of the southern counties there were heavy snow storms, it practically put an end to gunning operations. During this frosty period Sir George Pigot and I made many excursions from Brighton to Shoreham and Lewes Marshes, where between us we made the odd bag of one white-fronted goose, one bittern, three wild ducks, six snipe, and a hen smew. Pigot had as good a chance of a right and left at a company of white-fronted geese as could be desired, for in that winter Lewes Marsh was full of geese of all sorts, but, as there was no cover more substantial than a gate post, they were unapproachable by stalking, and the only way to get a shot was to find them with the spy-glass, and that done, we headed them by making a long *détour*, and crawled up to gate posts wide from each other, behind which we squatted; then as soon as our driver had watched us into

position through his spy glass, he started straight for the birds, and having put them up, it was a matter of chance as to whether they came over us. After a few days we began to learn their line of flight to the sea, and profiting by this, the geese on several occasions had come so near to Pigot that he had heard the No. 1 shot from his twelve-bore rattle against the birds without producing any other effect than to quicken their flight. Determined to alter this state of affairs, off he went to Messrs. Weston, the well-known Brighton gunmakers, from whom he borrowed a double eight-bore, weighing some twelve pounds. The first day he took this ponderous weapon out we soon found a small lot of thirteen white-fronted geese busy feeding on the grass, so, after getting into position, the birds were duly moved. My friend sat behind a gate-post on a frozen puddle, while the disturbed geese came quite low, only a few yards off the ground, directly on to him. Taken by surprise, he fired instantly, only to miss, when the recoil of the heavy gun, helped by the position in which he was sitting, rolled him over

feet uppermost in the air, from which pose he could not recover himself in time to give them the second barrel. The birds then rose high, but luckily came straight over me. I had treble A shot in the right barrel of my twelve-bore, which was discharged ineffectually; then followed the second barrel, loaded with sixteen pellets of S.S.G., when out of the clouds came with a rushing sound a great goose, to fall with a noisy thud on the frozen grass some seventy yards behind me. It was indeed a pity Pigot had discarded his twelve-bore in favour of the big gun, for, as he is far above an average shot, he must have got a brace.

This was the first white-fronted goose I had ever shot, so, having read they were "the ortolans of the goose tribe" and considered great delicacies, I sent it to the late George Bonnor, who delighted in giving his intimates good things, and who also knew no more about white-fronted geese than I did; therefore, a few rather particular friends were invited to meet this goose when cooked, while loudly Bonnor sang its praises as it was being carved. He and I got helped

last; one mouthful was enough; it was *beastly*, oily, tough, and fishy. Long faces were plentiful round the table, and then, they seeing that their verdict was also ours, we all had a hearty laugh, and a "go" each of liqueur brandy put matters right.

1891.

From the 11th February to 16th March I fished the Carlogie water of the Dee with Charles Baily, staying at Kincardine O'Neil. The weather proved cold and boisterous, and there were very few fish in the water, for, as the whole of this stretch is a high-water fishery, it was of course at summer level during most of the time we were there, and but nineteen fish between us was the score.

The enormous quantities of kelts found in the Dee in the months of early spring bring into greater prominence here than on less plentifully stocked rivers the subject of kelt preservation, of which I am a warm advocate. Such vast numbers, however, met their death each season by cold steel on this river, that in

1894 the Marquis of Huntly issued a circular to Deeside anglers asking them to refrain from gaffing the kelts—an appeal which should commend itself to all good fishermen, not only on the banks of the Dee, but on every other river where rods are plied in the early spring. To gaff the kelts is the custom in many places, and anglers have doubtlessly become so habituated to the practice as to unthinkingly lend themselves to its perpetuation. In this matter the law of the land is a most half-hearted piece of legislation, which badly requires alteration. At present anyone found in possession of a kelt may be fined five pounds, which penalty was no doubt directed against poachers and the traffic in and export of foul fish. The law having thus emphatically recognised the usefulness of the kelt, nevertheless allows anglers to destroy them in great numbers by the gaff, and so long as the mortally wounded fish is cast back to the river, legal requirements are fulfilled; therefore, as the statute now stands, an angler may fearlessly kill any number of kelts as long as he does not

keep them, while if a poacher or shepherd has but one in his possession, whether for sale or for food, he is promptly fined five pounds.

The total annual waste of salmon life caused by the gaff is something very large. For instance, on the Dee in the spring of 1891, fully two thousand clean fish were taken by the rods up to the end of April, and it may be accepted that an equal number of kelts were brought to bank, and if even only half of these were killed in the gaffing, it would be far too large a yearly tribute to cold steel. Personally, I do not think it is nearly every other fish that survives the barbarous operation, for I remember, when I was fishing the Crathes water, the anglers on some of the reaches above made a practice of gaffing every kelt they landed, which filled the pools I was casting with dead and dying fish, the most of which I took out to satisfy myself as to the cause of death.

My game book tells me I took in the season of 1884, by the end of April, three hundred and thirty-five fish out of the Kineskie and Crathes water, of which but

thirty-five were clean, or an average of between seven and eight foul fish for every fresh-run one; but this was an exceptionally heavy take of kelts. There are but few anglers who would grumble if a fine were imposed on gaffing a kelt, which would be a better plan than forbidding the carrying a gaff until after a certain date, as is now being done on a few rivers, the landing net required for salmon being perforce so large as to entail the necessity of a gillie to carry and use it; moreover, there are numbers of anglers who delight in going out quite alone, as well as others who cannot afford the expense of an attendant, and thus I would make it a fineable offence to put cold steel into a kelt, and then leave each angler to his own devices. I am credibly informed that kelt sells for sixpence a pound in Aberdeen, so, therefore, any penalty should be sufficiently heavy to forbid the making of a profit after payment of the fine. How people can be found to purchase kelt passes my comprehension, for out of curiosity I once had the middle slice from a large, "well mended" one boiled, and anything more horrid,

tasteless, blankety, and nauseating I cannot imagine. This particular fish was so well mended that my gillie, judging it to be clean, gaffed it in deep water before I had seen it. As it was struck through a vital part, I yielded to his entreaties for permission to keep it for a Sunday dinner, and thus it came about the fish was knocked on the head, hidden under the bank, and fetched home in the dark. My gillie warmly assured me that if I would but try a piece, I should be unable to detect any difference between foul and fresh-run salmon, but, as will be gathered from the foregoing remarks, the result did not come up to expectations.

The following 12th of August found me the guest of W. H. Ransford, at Soroba Lodge, by Oban, who, in addition to the shooting of the estate, also had the sporting over the south end of the Isle of Kerrera, a ground which, if properly looked after, is capable of vast improvement. As it was a bad grouse and black-game season, we got but ninety-nine grouse, ten black-game, ten snipe, two teal, and five hares up to the 31st August.

As usual, on the 1st September I revisited Balls Park, Charles Wodehouse, Harold Finch Hatton, and Fred Wingfield making up the shooters, when in twelve days we got exactly 500 head, of which 468 were partridges.

The 30th of September saw me the guest of Frank Lawson at one of the most sporting places in Scotland, viz., Pitfour by Mintlaw, in Aberdeenshire. Here I also found Cecil Block, A. K. Foster, Reggie Turner, and Edward Hulse. This property is upwards of 22,000 acres in extent, with a very pretty house placed in a large park, in which there is a fine lake. In the nine days I had there we killed, walking in line, 615 partridges, 73 pheasants, 8 grouse, 8 duck, 5 snipe, 196 hares, 569 rabbits, and 12 various. Hulse left us on the 9th of September, his place being taken by Bernard Posno, who unluckily, the first day he was out, jumped short at a very soft ditch, and went souse into some most odoriferous refuse right up to his armpits, a proceeding which reduced him to going off to the nearest farmhouse to borrow some clean clothes, in which he sat

till we were ready to start home; and, moreover, he could not well do otherwise, as the suit lent him belonged to a very stout man of 6 feet 2 inches, our unlucky companion being slim and some eight inches shorter.

From Pitfour I went to stay with Brydges Willyams at Aberdalgie, on the Dupplin Water of the Earn. On this trip anticipation and realization were indeed wide apart, for, during the whole six days I was there, the river ran in an extremely dirty flood, and vexatious work it was to walk daily to Dupplin Weir to look at the fish passing up. Watch in hand, I used to wait by the hour and count them running up, and as, at whatever time of the day I paid my visit, there were ever about the same number of fish ascending the weir, it is quite certain several thousand fish passed into the upper waters during that time. On asking "Old Tom," Willyams' fisherman, if the fish ran as freely during the night as they did in the day, he assured me that in the darkness they ran even faster and in greater numbers, in which opinion

he was confirmed by the river watchers. Now, as I passed at least two hours each day at this much-abused weir (up which I have often seen it stated that no fish can ascend), and never saw less than thirty fish pass up in an hour, and as this went on for five successive days, I am sure I am quite within the mark in saying some thousands of fish swam this weir. Although nearly hopeless, I could not resist trying a cast or two each day, my ultimate reward being one small fish to an enormous prawn. In the season previous to this, Brydges Willyams and Colonel Legh, his lucky visitor, fishing opposite each other on the Dyke stream, had twenty-five good fish between them in a short day.

On coming south again, I had some nice days with Charles Baily near Lindfield, with more good times at Tillingbourne and all the other old places; also a nice day at Berry Hill, near Dorking, with Mr. Robert Barclay, and others with "Billy" Keen at Patcham.

The 17th of December saw me again at Carnanton, where I found assembled Admiral the Hon. Victor

Montagu, Colonel Legh, Ainslie Walker, and Humphry Willyams; and in the following six days we got 770 head, of which 718 were pheasants and 12 woodcock.

1892.

On the 23rd March I was again the guest of Charles Baily at Aberlour, when, during the fishing of the Wester Elchies water of the Spey till the 19th April, he became a convert to the use of the natural minnow. With that lure we took 32 salmon and 117 kelts—duly returned uninjured; honours fairly divided; and, though the water was in good order for the fly, no other two fishers on the river made nearly such a score in the same period.

Balls Park again on the 1st of September, where I stayed nearly the whole month; Fred Wingfield, Charles Wodehouse, Harold Finch Hatton, Charles Greville, Colonel Daniel, and Jack Fryer appearing alternately on the scene, for my host did not shoot more than four guns a day. It was a very fine, hot

month, and in nineteen days we got 646 partridges and 64 head of other things. During my stay here this season several of us were witnesses of a very remarkable piece of marksmanship made by a distinguished foreign guest at Balls Park, who here made his *début* at partridge shooting. In other lands bears, wolves and wild boars had fallen victims to his aim, but up to this time the pursuit of the merry little brown bird was absolutely a sealed book to him, so it was not surprising that he made but little show. After we had been walking in line for some time, an under-keeper joined us with the news that several coveys of birds had settled on a closely shorn stubble field in front of us, and, as on the far side of it there was a thick high hedge, we agreed to make a *détour*, line the hedge, and have the stubble driven to us. Our novice was placed in the middle of the line, and was hardly there before a large covey of birds came calling high over his head. Holding his gun at arm's length in front of him, with the stock turned directly to the earth, just as if he were

a saluting sentry, both barrels were discharged, and to our great astonishment and his great joy, three birds fell from the covey!

On the 29th I was again at Aberdalgie with Brydges Willyams, and now I had my revenge for the bad luck of the previous season. In nine days, during which my host and I got 34 fish, there fell to my lot a red-letter one of six fish, headed by that forty-pounder which is the fulfilment of the dream of all anglers, and which I never expected to have the good fortune to realize, for there are hundreds and hundreds of fishermen to whom such a stroke of luck never comes. This fish gave me a fine fight, for I was alone, and eventually gaffed him for myself nearly a mile below where I hooked him, in the tail of Lord Dupplin's stream, not far below the weir; and from this same stream the late Lord Dupplin once took twenty-one fish in a day.

From Aberdalgie I went on to visit Colonel Legh and Ainslie Walker at Ballathie-on-Tay, and on the 12th, 13th and 15th of October we got seventeen fish,

amongst them being one of 44 lbs., killed by the Colonel.

Returning south, there came another good day at Balls Park Wood, where, in company with Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, George Prescott, General Fryer, Brydges Willyams, Burdett Coutts, and Sydney Hankey, we totalled up 964 head, of which 726 were pheasants.

On the 16th of November I came on to new ground in the shape of three days at Cornbury Park, Charlbury, Oxford, then rented by Mr. M. L. Wynne. Our party was completed by the Hon. Eric North, George Norris, Aubrey Cartwright, Christopher Tower, Fane Gladwin, Hermon Hodge, Captain Waller, and the unfortunate Lord Beaumont, who, later on, was the victim of a fatal gun accident. We shot each day in the ancient Forest of Wychwood, extending to some 1700 acres, in which tradition says Robin Hood and his merry men often poached. The bag for the three days was 2079 head, about half pheasants and half rabbits.

BALLATHIE.

Then on December 2nd came a very nice day with Tower at Weald Hall, Brentwood, where, in company with Lord Rookwood, Dorrien Smith, Colonel Kingscote, and Mr. Daniel, we got 277 head, as nearly as possible half pheasants and half rabbits.

CHAPTER IX.

1893.

The 1st of April found me once more the guest of Charles Baily at the Huntly Arms Hotel, Aboyne, where we stayed till the 22nd. Not a drop of rain had fallen since the first week in March, the hill snows had melted, while each day was cloudless and hot. Fishing was nearly at a standstill, so that in the time named we got but eighteen fish between us, while for the last week there were three rods at work, as Baily had asked Percy Laming to join him.

Next, from May 20th to 27th, I spent a week at the Station Hotel, Perth, with Mr. and Mrs. Brydges Willyams, they having just taken a lease of Battleby, and going up to make things ship-shape. From there we fished Dupplin Loch on the 24th and 26th, and on

two very bright, hot, still days we got but seven trout, the largest of which was 3½ lbs., and the smallest 1 lb. The thick growth of weeds and the lowness of the loch were much against us, and we were unavoidably broken several times.

August 12th saw me again at Raehills with John Hope Johnstone, Captain Gordon Hughes being the other guest. There had been nearly incessant rain from the commencement of the month, and thus we found the grouse very, very wild, and in nine days the bag only reached a total of 394 head, of which 376 were grouse.

As usual, the 1st of September found me at Balls Park, where sport was much the same as before. Harold Finch Hatton was again one of the party, and on the evening of his arrival my daughter, aged twelve, came rushing to my room, and excitedly asked me to come on to the lawn, as a gentleman had just arrived who "was throwing a bit of wood into the air, which turned into a bird and flew round the house." Unable to understand what was going on, I was dragged to the

lawn, and found Finch Hatton throwing a boomerang most beautifully, and really the child's description was not so very wide of the mark. It was the first time any of us had ever seen one thrown, and I think I am right in saying our friend is the only Englishman in England who can perform the feat, which is a very pretty sight to witness.

Then followed various days in Sussex; and on the 23rd of October, at Shermanbury Grange, Henfield, in company with our host, Forrester Britten, his nephew, Captain Colvin, H. R. Porter, Colonel Lyon, and the Rev. A. L. Wynne, we got, on a bright, hot day, 115 pheasants, 4 partridges, 6 hares, and 19 rabbits.

Next, on November 6th and 7th, came two more days at Balls Park, the total being 1496 pheasants, 6 partridges, 4 hares, 340 rabbits, and 11 various. The guns were H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, Prince Adolphus of Teck, Colonel and Captain FitzGeorge, Lord Gainsborough, Baron Henry de Worms, Sir John Astley, and Cecil Lowther. At this period "The Mate" was busy writing his book, and I sat

up with him each evening well into the small hours, whilst he read me some of his MS., asking me to give him any hints I could. "You yourself are a bit of a book-writer," said he, "so fire a volley into me if I read out anything you think is rubbish." He was likewise possessed by a great anxiety to put his words into the most polite language, while I urged him strongly to leave as much of the "Astley" in them as possible.

A somewhat laughable incident happened as we were all assembled at the front door in the morning, waiting for the omnibus to drive us to the meet. The Commander-in-Chief (and a better or a kinder one our army never had), with our host, were to pony to the trysting-place, and as they came through the hall to mount their steeds, Astley appeared on the scene wrapped up in a gorgeously loud patterned homespun coat, when, catching sight of him, the Duke exclaimed, "Why, Mate, wherever did you go to get that ugly coat?" To which remark Sir John replied with much modesty, but yet with a merry twinkle in his eye, "Well, sir, you have forgotten you gave it me yourself."

A further incident that put me to some confusion also occurred that day. It had been arranged overnight between my host and I, that on the next day he would conduct H.R.H. to his stand at each beat, while, as I knew the wood well, to me was deputed the placing of the other guns, this being done so that the head keeper might be absolutely free to superintend the stopping and beating. Just before luncheon the Duke and his host were some fifty yards in advance of the rest of the party, all going along a very muddy ride to take up positions for the ensuing beat. Whilst progressing in this order, Phillips, who was busily talking to his royal guest, in a moment of inattention to business, turned into a ride which I knew did not lead to the spot chosen for the Duke's stand, and, anxious to put matters right, I trotted forward, calling out as I got near my host, "Hold hard, George," when, to my confusion and dismay, H.R.H. turned round and blandly remarked, "Well, what is it?" I began a hasty explanation, but ere it was completed the Duke had grasped the situation, and, laughing pleasantly, he said, "He ought

GROUP OUTSIDE BALLS WOOD.

to have remembered there were more Georges in the world than one"—a gracious speech which made me quite happy, and now that it is over, I am rather proud of being able to say that I, formerly an ensign in Her Majesty's 25th and 41st Regiments, have addressed the Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Forces by his Christian name, and yet live unreproved and unscathed to tell the tale.

On November 22nd I was again a guest at Cornbury Park, finding there Colonel Ellison, W. H. Jenkins, H. B. Brookes, Hermon Hodge, Francis Maclean, Q.C., George Faudel-Phillips, George Norris, and General Addington. In the next three days we killed 2313 head, of which 1695 were rabbits and 608 were pheasants.

At the end of this season Wynne gave up Cornbury, and in 1895 he took the Plashett shootings near Lewes, asking me if I would look after them for him, which, as I was living at Brighton, was a most congenial amusement, giving me many opportunities of acquiring a further insight into the gamekeeper's life and of studying

the habits of nesting game birds, for Marshall, the head man at Plashett's, was an exceptionally well-spoken, intelligent one, who, while freely telling me all he knew, was yet quite open to change any of his own methods for those likely to prove more efficacious in the preservation of game

As birds were rather scarce on the shooting, Wynne asked me to order fifty brace of Hungarian partridges, so to Cross, of Liverpool, the order was sent, and, as both gentlemen and keepers appear to be in some doubt as to the best way of turning them out, it may interest them to hear how I proceeded.

On the appointed day the birds duly arrived at Isfield station, perfectly packed in lots of five brace in each basket. Previously to this we had selected, in the centre of the ground, a thick furze hedge, by the side of which ran a rill of spring water, along which we strewed a plentiful supply of barley sweepings and some Indian corn. Then, having kept the birds at Marshall's cottage till about an hour before dusk, we carted them to the vicinity of the chosen spot, and, after studying the

direction of the wind, we picked out a corner of a field hemmed in by high hedges, between two and three hundred yards from the furze. Then, placing a basket on the grass, I cut the fastenings, when away went the five brace of birds, clearly overjoyed at regaining their liberty, and, flying straight down wind, they alighted exactly as we hoped, which, however, they were almost bound to do, as we stood directly behind the liberated birds, while the tall hedges on either side shut out all other view of the country. As soon as they settled they began to run about and call and examine their new quarters, while in ten minutes some of them were feeding, as I could see with my binoculars. At intervals of five minutes we released the remainder, the whole of them making straight for the hedge of furze. Finer or healthier birds I never saw, and, though a little food was put down for the next ten days, they had learned to do for themselves long before that time had lapsed, and they eventually paired with their English brothers and sisters and bred well.

I believe this plan of giving Hungarian partridges

their liberty just before dusk is a better one than that, so often advised, of turning them out in darkness. The great points are to get the wind blowing direct to the spot chosen for them to fly to, and then to give the birds little or no chance of seeing any other place to make for.

Next, in the month of December, came a lot of small days—none the less sporting on that account—with Arthur Whitaker at West Grinstead Park, at Shermanbury Grange with Forrester Britten, at Skeynes Hill with Charles Baily, and at Laughton, near Lewes, with Sir James Duke. Here, on the last day but one of this shooting season, in company with my host, Colonel Dudley Sampson, Alfred Broadwood, and J. Baxendale, we got nineteen brace of driven birds in the highest wind I ever shot in.

1894.

The 1st of September found me in the old Hertfordshire quarters, where in two days we got 410 partridges, 14 hares, 18 ducks, 16 rabbits, and 5 various; but

this total includes a very nice day with Charles Wodehouse at his pretty place, Wolmers Park, near Hertford.

On the 23rd of October and three following days I stayed with Captain H. P. Holford at Alderholt Park, near Fordingbridge, which he had rented for this season; and here I met General Truell, Charles Radclyffe, and Captain Custance. Gales and heavy showers prevailed on all the four days, interfering greatly with the making of as good a bag as was expected.

On the 8th of November came a pleasant day with Whitaker at West Grinstead Park, where I met Captain Rawson, Captain Fenwick, General Godman, A. Scrase-Dickens and Walter Skingley, the bag being 125 head, of which 111 were pheasants, and I killed my *first hare this season!*

The 12th of November and three following days I stayed with Colonel Cornwall Legh, at High Legh Hall, Knutsford, meeting there Brydges Willyams, Colonel Ireland Blackburn, Colonel Rowley Egerton, S. Le

Hunte Hobson, T. and H. Sowerby, and T. Pilkington. The four days produced 1695 head, 1208 being pheasants; also there were 250 hares, a very unusual thing to come across now-a-days, and only to be explained by the fact that the Colonel and his tenants are the best of friends. The brothers Sowerby are well known as two first-class shots, and it was a pretty sight to see them, when standing next each other at a small partridge drive, drop eight birds with as many cartridges out of two coveys that passed between them.

On the 14th I killed two pheasants with one barrel, which I have never seen done either before or since. They were the only two birds on the wing, and, flushed a long way off, they were coming very high in the air. I pulled as the cock cleared the trees, when both — the other a hen, apparently some ten yards behind the first bird — collapsed and fell quite dead. Colonel Legh's breed of wavy-coated retrievers and black field spaniels are too well known to require any praise, and "Miner II." and "Crackle," the spaniel, are just as good as dogs can be.

COLNNEL H. CORNWALL LEGH.

"Miner II." "Crackle."

This trip over, there ensued various days at West Grinstead Park ; at Coolhurst, near Horsham, with Alwyne Scrase-Dickens ; at Knepp Castle with Sir Raymond Burrell ; at Shermanbury, Hall Barn and Laughton. At Knepp there are at times large quantities of snipe congregated together at each end of the long sheet of water running through the park. The only way of getting at them is to drive them, but they often rise too high before coming over the guns, while at all times they are difficult to shoot, as, when they fly in wisps, they swerve in all directions the moment they see the shooter, and for these reasons the list of slain was seldom in proportion to the number of cartridges expended, fifteen snipe and two teal being the best recorded result of the two drives.

On the 7th of January, 1895, a long spell of frost set in, which lasted for two months, and during this period, in company with Captain Robert Sandeman, various excursions to Lewes Marshes were made. Amongst other things we killed was a purple sandpiper, a woodcock *off a grass field*, and a white-fronted goose,

this latter bird being killed dead at fully 150 yards by a pellet of S.S.G. from Sandeman's eight-bore. In mentioning this very long shot, it must not be forgotten that there are but twelve pellets of S.S.G. to the ounce, that the gun was loaded with two ounces of this, and that each pellet of the charge was in reality a small bullet, and one of them happened to catch the white-fronted one fair in the very middle of his neck; and, on joining forces, we remarked simultaneously to each other, "Well, that was a most unlucky bird."

1895.

The 1st of August found me at Battleby, near Perth, fishing with Brydges Willyams till the 10th. During that time the river was low, with the weather sultry, and I got but two fish, both in the Black Craig, each coming to minnows I had caught in a burn hard by.

The "twelfth" found me at Derculich by Grandtully, the guest of Captain Holford. For its size this is perhaps one of the most comfortable houses in Scotland;

the moor, however, is some distance away, and so small that it can easily be shot over in a day. My host had the bad luck to injure his ankle on the first day, thus being, to my great regret, incapacitated from taking the hill again during the rest of my stay. I had five other days on the moor, with Sir Berkeley Sheffield for companion, getting just over fifty brace of grouse. There is also some low ground shooting in Strath Tay, with half a mile of fishing in that river; but except in the early spring this is of no account, Holford's total take from June to the 15th of October being one grilse, and lucky indeed to get even that!

The 20th of August found me the guest of the Duke of Westminster, on Lochmore, in Sutherland, somewhat of a "far cry," for after reaching Lairg there is yet forty miles of posting. All that, however, is as nothing when once the hospitable doors of Lochmore Lodge are reached. Then the only trouble to anticipate (and the longer one stays the greater the difficulty) is taking one's departure without looking and feeling so dejected as to deprive one of the ability of doing

the same with good grace. The Duke had also invited Archibald Thorburn to arrive with me, so, having met at Inverness, we did the rest of the journey together.

On reaching Lairg, we learned that the recent bursting of a waterspout in the hills had carried away one of the bridges on the road to our destination; under these circumstances we had to proceed by water, and a small launch from the hotel being ready, we puffed away up Loch Shin to Overscaig, where a "machine" duly meeting us, we reached Lochmore in time for a late dinner.

In addition to the house on Lochmore, at Kyle Strome, eight miles off, the Duke has a smaller house, beautifully and romantically situated close to the narrow ocean entrance to the salt water lochs of Glen Coul and Glen Dubh, and there we heard that Lord and Lady Arthur Grosvenor and Lord Belgrave were staying for a few days' stalking.

On the 23rd I stalked on the home beat at the back of the Lodge, which at this period of the year is chiefly hind ground, and though we spied several

fine fat stags, as bad luck would have it, they were all off our beat; so, finding nothing but small stags, I did not fire a shot. Thorburn went with me all day, and took several pretty sketches and photographs of the gillies with their ponies. Whilst at dinner, the Kyle Strome express brought word that the party there had got three stags that day.

On the 24th, although it blew a gale, with heavy showers falling, Charles Cavendish went to the hill and got a nice stag, while I tried to fish Loch Stack; but the wind was so fierce that our boat could not face the loch proper, and we had to work in a sheltered corner at one end of it, where I took about a dozen nice sea trout. In the afternoon the Kyle Strome party arrived at Lochmore, when it was arranged we were to take their places on Monday, this day being Saturday.

On the 26th I started, at nine o'clock, to stalk over the hills between Lochmore and Kyle Strome, with William Elliot as companion. It was luckily a day so splendid that the keenest stalker or the most

enthusiastic lover of scenery could wish for nothing better than the chance of making this tramp. The Duke, Captain and Mrs. Lawley, and Thorburn were to steam round to Kyle Strome in the *More Vane* (the Big Witch), a really lively lady, who could roll to a pretty good tune when facing the swell of the Atlantic driven through the Minch by a north wind. I had ridden to the first spying place, where, meeting Elliot, we proceeded to inspect the ground in front of us, when, greatly to his surprise, not a horn was visible. We resumed our march, Elliot gently remarking, "Just bide a wee, sir," as he pointed significantly to the sky-line in front of us.

This was reached in due course, and crouching low as we crossed it, and then finding a comfortably dry place to sit on, the spy-glasses again made their appearance, and this time there were indeed plenty to be seen, for dotted all around us were such numbers of stags as to cause my man to whisper that nearly the whole of those on the beat must have gathered into this one part of it. There were stags

alone, others in twos and threes, and again goodly herds, so that it now became not so much a matter of picking out a shootable beast as a question of selecting the fattest that was stalkable, for I must remind my readers this was but the 26th of August, and for this reason many more than half the stags in sight still bore velvet. There were, however, a good few quite clean horns, while upward of a dozen could be seen with antlers already burnished and getting dark. Almost as Elliot asked me to turn my glass on to "yon bonnie beast" to see if he should not be the one for which we should have a try, I was anxiously inspecting a yet bonnier specimen lying by himself a long way in front of us. Pointing him out, there ensued a discussion as to whether it would be possible to get to him without moving many other deer, or indeed alarming the whole corrie. It being eventually determined to go for Elliot's find, half an hour later, after a short piece of very dirty crawling, we found ourselves but only fifty yards off the bonnie one. This was a deal too near to make me happy, for I dislike these

shots at such close quarters, well knowing how high the Express rifle throws the bullet in the first fifty yards of its flight; while also at such short ranges there is ever a much greater chance of being detected as the top of one's cap comes into sight. On this occasion, however, all went well, for I remembered to align the rifle sights quite on the outline of the body, but directly under the heart, so thus, on pressing the trigger, he bit the dust and was absolutely dead before we got up to him. A very fat stag he was; his eight rather thin points quite clean and burnished, with a span of 30 inches, for in this part of the north horns seldom grow either heavy or stout. That evening in the Kyle Strome larder he weighed, without heart or liver, 17 stone 2 lbs.

Continuing to stalk our way onwards, we soon found another good beast, with clean darkish horns, which was about the same heavy weight as the one just killed. Again Elliot took me to quite close quarters, when, as I sighted the rifle, up went the stag's head, making it clear I was detected and that another second would

see him galloping away. Forgetting to keep the sight quite low, I pulled the trigger in a hurry, only to make an abominable miss; then he unsighted me before I could use the left barrel, while, on again coming into view, he was well out of range, so, in a state of depression, I sat watching him vanish. Now, the stag when missed had been browsing on the edge of a deep valley, into which we had had no chance of taking a peep, and suddenly, ere I had reloaded, five stags appeared galloping up from the depths below to follow the friend I had so unsuccessfully disturbed. The last but one was the best of the bunch—a fat, plump fellow, clear of velvet. Feeling somewhat upset at having only one barrel loaded, I took an extra careful aim and rolled him over. After this, we made the best of our way to Kyle Strome Lodge, from whence, as we neared the door, our host's well-known cheery "jodel" greeted us from his dressing-room window over the porch, while he enquired, "What sport?"

The 27th was a fearfully wet, wild day; however, as the *More Vane* had steam up, Lawley and I started

for the forest, and putting him ashore at the head of Loch Dhu, he was met by Farquhar Mackenzie, the two going off to the hill. The yacht then took me on to Glen Coul to meet William Elliot (a brother of John's). With him I had a very long, wet tramp, during which we followed for many a mile a small herd of stags, rendered restless by the bad weather. Just as dusk was coming on I got a shot at about one hundred and fifty yards, a distance, to my mind, much preferable to fifty yards. The bullet sped true, dropping the stag in his tracks; it was a directly down-hill shot, and as he fell on the steep slope, the muscular contractions of his hind-quarters, which are ever more or less present in the death throes, started him rolling before we could get up to where he lay. Never before have I seen such a roll as that, as for fully 300 yards his carcass bounded down this broken, rocky face; and gathering impetus at every turn, he was thus so utterly smashed that, when seen skinned in the larder next day, he was indeed a sorry sight.

On the 27th the Duke had promised us a spectacular

treat in the shape of having the deer "moved" off Ben Leod, a big bare hill on the borders of the Glen Coul and Glen Dubh beats, on which from three to five hundred stags were massed in unapproachable security. Anxiously were we looking forward to seeing this great herd of stags come over the sky-line, a show which is at all times an exciting and blood-stirring one for whoever beholds it. The late Sir Edwin Landseer gave a fine exposition of the force of this sentiment when witnessing his first deer drive. So carried away was he by his feelings, that—though he had his rifle in his hand, and had been solely placed where he was for the express purpose of killing deer—forgetting all else, he sprang upright, clapped his horror-stricken gillie on the shoulder, while loudly he exclaimed, "By heavens, it's a sight for a king!" though in doing this he quite spoilt the whole drive. Imagine, then, our vexation when the morn of this 27th of August was ushered in with rain falling in torrents from leaden-coloured skies. As from the first it was a hopeless day, after giving it a chance to clear up,

at mid-day I steamed up to Glen Dubh and tried the hill with Mackenzie, but the weather turning from bad to worse, I had to come home well drenched without getting a shot. On reaching Kyle Strome, which was much lower-lying ground than that on which I had been, I learned the weather had cleared sufficiently after lunch to let Lawley go out and kill a splendidly fat stag of 17 stone 5 lbs.

On the day following, the 29th, the Duke, Thorburn and I started in the *More Vane* in a perfect deluge to return by sea to Lochmore, and, though there was no wind, yet the long Atlantic swell made our craft roll heavily. On the route we put in to Badcall, a desolate-looking village, to leave various haunches and quarters of venison; and then steaming to Scourie, we again landed with more venison and also to visit Mr. McIver, for many years the Duke of Sutherland's factor in these parts; and a more remarkably handsome, distinguished-looking old gentleman I never set eyes on. On quitting Scourie, we passed round Handa Isle, where in the nesting season such vast numbers of sea birds lay their

Group at Langwell Lodge.

eggs on the ledges of the perpendicular rocky cliffs. We then shortly entered Loch Laxford, at the end of which a waggonette met us, drawn by a fast-trotting pair of horses from a Sandringham sale; and, still in the ceaseless downpour, a six-mile drive brought us happily to Lochmore.

August 30th saw Thorburn and I driving back to Lairg on a bright sunny day, where we parted, he going south, while I stayed the night at the hotel, to post next day to Langwell Lodge, on the Oykel, for a visit to my old friend Captain G. W. Hunt, better known to his intimates as "Jonas." As it was a poor grouse season, I shot chiefly round the marches during my seven days' sport, in one of which I had the not to be despised help of Sir Charles Ross, of Balnagowan; when the total bag was 136 grouse, with a few black-cock and hares, while, the Oykel not being in good ply, we only got a fish apiece.

On the 13th of September it was ho! for Balls Park again, where I stayed till the 10th of October, getting nine days of sport, which included three with

Charles Wodehouse at Wolmers, the bag being 123 pheasants, 281 partridges, 25 ducks, with a few hares and rabbits. It was here that I heard, to my great sorrow, of the death of my old friend John Hargreaves at Glentromie, on the 3rd of October.

This visit over, there then came other days at Shermanbury, West Grinstead Park and Coolhurst, and at the last named place, with A. Scrase-Dickens, Arthur Whitaker and Dr. Jukes, I had a nice day of 241 pheasants, 7 ducks and some bunnies; while a few days later at West Grinstead, with Arthur Whitaker, in company with General Kerr, General Lance, Colonel Kilgour and Scrase-Dickens, we got 315 pheasants, with 37 head of other sorts. Then came another trip to High Legh, where I found exactly the same party as in the previous season. In very wet weather, the four days gave us 1388 head, of which 1127 were pheasants, with 151 hares.

The 16th of December found me at Normanby Park, Doncaster, visiting Sir Berkeley Sheffield, and meeting there Colonel St. Quentin, G. Carey Elwes, T. Poynter

and Sir Joseph Savory. The four days resulted in a total of 1632 head, of which 1208 were pheasants. Then more days at West Grinstead Park, Patcham and Knepp Castle, brought the shooting season of 1895-96 all too soon to an end.

CHAPTER X.

1896.

On March 27th I arrived again at Langwell Lodge, in Ross-shire, to wage war against the Oykel salmon; and for the excellent photographs of this place and Carnanton I am indebted to the kindness of my hostess. Leaving the train at Invershin station, I made for Inveran Hotel, reaching it at mid-day, when, by the kind permission of Mr. Arnold, I had my first cast on the Shin, he joining me in the afternoon, each of us getting a good fish out of the Bridge Pool. The next day I posted to Langwell, finding Captain and Mrs. Hunt, with the two keepers, MacLeod and Mackintosh, waiting to welcome me on the north side of the wire foot suspension bridge, the two men soon carrying my baggage across to the lodge. Sport

promised well, for I heard from my hostess that she had killed six fish, averaging ten pounds each, the day before—all of which were hooked while wading, which is a record performance, I think, for a lady facing snow water in the month of March. When in ply, this river is a charming one to fish, but, as it has no large loch to keep it going, like the Shin and the Awe, unless the weather is distinctly showery, it quickly falls too low to admit of very successful angling.

At present Captain Hunt has the whole of both banks of the river, from the falls above Oykel Bridge Inn to the Sutherland Kyle, a distance of some seven miles. This stretch he divides into upper and lower beats, and putting a limit of two rods to each section, who can use no other lure than the fly, he allows the Oykel Bridge inn-keeper to let one beat, while keeping the other for himself and a guest, or for the use of whoever occupies Langwell Lodge. As the beats are fished on alternate days, the four rods absolutely share and share alike, and with the water right there is no better bit of fishing

in Scotland for the rent. The landlord of the Oykel Bridge Inn will answer all enquiries on this subject. There is, moreover, ample room for two rods on each beat, and the fish are bold, free risers, while much of the casting requires precise neatness. During my stay at Langwell, my host fished but little, as, amusing himself with heather-burning and trapping, he passed his rod on to Mrs. Hunt on all likely days.

I remained in these happy quarters till the 29th of April; the last ten days, however, being horridly fine, sport was but poor during that time. Our take for the month was 34 fish, weighing just 340 lbs., and practically caught in some fifteen days. Since the commencement of this season of 1897, Captain Hunt has rented the Skibo and Invercarron nets, with a view to making sport better both on the Carron, the Shin, the Oykel, and the Casseley. With that laudable object in view, he is going to entirely remove the Invercarron net for the first few months of the season, so consequently it may be expected that the coming months of March, April and May will show greatly

Langwell Lodge.

increased sport in each of these rivers; and thus with the greatest interest I look forward to revisiting Langwell in April.

The 11th of August found me again visiting Harry Holford at Glenfeochan House, some four miles south of Oban. The 12th was too wet for sport; but, starting on the 13th, in six days of very unsettled weather, we bagged, to two guns, 196 grouse, with a few ducks, black-cock, and hares. Sometimes my host shot with me, at others E. St. Quentin or Hardress Stevenson made the second gun. Owing to previous bad seasons, the bag was limited to 150 brace; but the grouse ground, if properly nursed and burnt, should soon be capable of yielding double that. One of the sporting features of Glenfeochan is the rabbit shooting, for, without ferreting overnight, three or four guns, walking in line across the bracken-clad hills on the side of Loch Feochan, could kill from seventy to a hundred bunnies in a few hours, while, as they would all be bolting at best pace, very quick shooting was necessary. At this pretty sport I had some very nice

days with my host and his two other guests, Charles Radclyffe and Edward Harrison.

The 28th of August saw me again at Battleby with Brydges Willyams, where, though we fished hard for the next week, we took but seven grilse, there being very few fish in the Tay. Then, on the 6th of September, making Oban headquarters, there I stayed until the 15th October, with my wife and daughter. During that time I had some pleasant, even if disappointing, days on the Awe, by the kindness of Colonel Murray, of Polmaise, and Colonel Thorpe, of Ardbrecknish; for, though there were plenty of fish in the water, no one could hit upon any combination of fur and feather that would tempt them to rise, and in some ten days only two fish rewarded our efforts. Colonel Thorpe's water is greatly spoiled by the opposite bank being fished by the visitors at Taynuilt Hotel, who are much too numerous to be pleasant. On the last day I was on this water there were two rods fishing the Cruive Pool — one done, the other commencing — and also two more playing the same

unsportsmanlike game on the pool above, viz., the Stepping-stones. Then, when the Cockneys at the Cruive had each fished two flies over that pool, they exchanged places with their brethren of the Stepping-stones.

Nice neighbours, these! and it is somewhat surprising that the Duke of Argyll, who lets this fine stretch of water to the Taynuilt Hotel, should not insist on the hotel rods being strictly limited to two only, which would be fair to all concerned, while also giving the water a better chance of making a reputation than it has at present, for the incessant flogging the best pools receive entirely spoils them. Solemnly I declare I counted one of the Cruive Pool Cockneys make seventeen casts, *each with a splash*, in exactly the same spot, and without pulling an inch of line off his reel!

Next came other days at Glenfeochan and on the Bonawe shootings at Taynuilt, which Holford's brother-in-law, Major Pearson, had rented for the season. This ground is part of the, at one period, celebrated sporting

estate of Campbell of Lochnell, which, when the whole 55,000 acres were let *en bloc*, was certainly one of the best all-round places in Scotland. At the present day, being broken up into five or six small shootings, it has become but the shadow of its former self.

On September 23rd I arrived at Lamington House, Lanarkshire, on a visit to Arthur Whitaker, finding there his brother Albert, Sir Raymond Burrell, Captain Dutton Hunt, Colonel Kilgour, A. Scrase-Dickens, and A. Wilkins, our hostess's brother. We got four days of driving, one day of skirmishing in line, with two half-days so wet that only two guns turned out. During this time we bagged 451 head, of which 270 were driven grouse, the balance being made up of every variety of game, including a few grey hens killed by mistake; indeed, one of our party showed such a marked inability to distinguish grey hens from grouse, that, as he shot straight, he was quickly christened "Lord de Grey Hen."

On October the 3rd I returned to Battleby,

BATTLEBY.

anticipating great doings. The other rods were Arthur Willyams and his son Humphrey. In four days we got but seven salmon and thirteen grilse, which was a poor tribute from the Tay at that time of year.

In taking leave of Battleby I will relate a most vexing mishap which befel one of the party staying there. Twice myself have I been the victim of the boy or the girl employed in small out-of-the-way villages by the Government to carry on their telegraphic monopoly. On the first occasion I wired from Aboyne—not a very small place either—to a London commissioner, on the morning of the day Zoedone won the Grand National steeplechase, "Zoedone ten pounds to win." This message I gave to my gillie to carry to the post-office before starting for the river-side. The next morning, on seeing in the *Scotsman* that I had won £120, a line was despatched asking that a cheque should in due course be forwarded to Aboyne. The reply to this was a letter saying my wire had been received, but minus the name of any horse, and therefore nothing had been done. Now,

my gillie's wife and daughter, a child of some fifteen years, kept a small shop and managed the post-office, so he was sent off for information, only to return to tell me: "Weel, sir, the wife was awa', and the lassie thocht the word Zoedone was something indeecent, and so she joost left it oot." Dearly as the idiotic mistake had cost me, it was yet impossible to help laughing.

On another occasion a small boy put me to the trouble and expense of a six hours' journey, for, having mislaid an invitation, and forgetting whether it was for the 17th or 27th of the month, I wired to my friend to send me a return message saying on which date he expected me. He being away from home, his agent, according to orders, opened the wire, and, not knowing what arrangements had been made, and yet being certain his chief would not be at home on the 17th, wired me, "Do not come seventeenth," which message, when it reached me, read, "*Do* come seventeenth."

These two samples of telegraphic carelessness—for which there is no remedy—were, however, but as trifles

when compared with what befel our friend at Battleby, for on October 25th, the Cambridgeshire day of 1893, he wired to his commissioner from Redgorten, a small village near Perth, "A pony each way Molly Morgan and Farndale." Thus, when he came in from a good day's shooting to find a wire saying that both animals had won their races, he sat down to dinner under the impression he had gained £578 10*s.*, for Molly started at 100 to 6 against her, and Farndale at 2 to 1 against him. Imagine, then, his astonishment when Monday came and he received but a cheque for £22 10*s.* Explanations ensued in due course, when it was discovered that the post office imp, never having heard of a "pony," thought it must be a clerical error for a *pound*, and had accordingly inserted that word in the wire entirely on his own responsibility!

Returning to Oban, I finished up with three days on the Bonawe shootings, kindly placed at my disposal by Major Pearson, who had gone south. Quitting Oban on the 15th of October, we reached Brighton on the 16th, and on the 17th I had a nice day at

Coolhurst, so it will be seen no time was lost. On the 20th there was also another good day at Billingbear, near Wokingham, with Charles T. D. Crews, where I met Lord Rathmore, Lord George Pratt, Edward Cassell, Alfred Biedermann, and George Herring, the bag for the day being 293 head, of which 275 were pheasants.

Next came some single days at Shermanbury and Coolhurst; and then the evening of the 16th November found me the guest of Frank Lawson at Maeswllch Castle, Glasbury-on-Wye, the party being made up by Lord Hay of Kinfauns (now Lord Kinnoul), Hal Faudel Phillips and "Bimbash" Stewart. Splendid covers these to shoot, for fast and high did the pheasants come in the four days, on one of which we were joined by an extra useful shot in the person of the late Mr. W. T. Baskerville, of Clyro Court. We got 1262 head, of which 1133 were pheasants. The bag would have been larger, but that a severe attack of neuritis (which is apparently very acute neuralgia) in the ball of the thumb totally incapacitated our host

from using his guns, and therefore to four guns only this bag may be regarded as an extra good one.

On the 14th December I returned to Maeswllch with Villiers Bagot, for Lawson, being still unable to handle a gun, had very kindly put the Castle, servants, keepers, horses, carriages, cellar, and everything else at our disposal. During the four days of our stay we had the help of the Rector of Glasbury, the Rev. H. G. Griffiths, and a friend of his, when we four bagged 386 head, of which 321 were pheasants, mostly cocks.

By way of extra excitement, we had on the morning of the 17th a somewhat sharp earthquake shock, which later on we read in the newspapers had been felt over a very wide area. I happened to be restless that night, and when the shock came, at about 4.30 in the morning, I was lying reading by candle-light. Without any warning, the silence of a perfectly still night was suddenly broken by a tremendous crash, just as if a thousand coalies had emptied, at the word of command, a thousand sacks of coals on the flat leaden roof of the Castle beneath which my bed-

room was situated. The whole building shook, then for the fraction of a second all was still, when simultaneously the green baize swing door of my room began to open and shut violently, the fire-irons fell, the jugs and basins rattled, while my bed, a very heavy old oak four-poster, hopped rapidly from side to side for some fifteen or twenty times. Though I had never before felt an earthquake shock, I yet recognised what the somewhat alarming disturbance must be, so, jumping out of bed, I threw open the window to take a look at the skies, to see if they presented anything unusual in their appearance. Beholding nothing strange, my attention was at once drawn to the frightened crowing of every cock pheasant in the place; the noise they made was not the rather hoarse "cock-cock" of the to-roost-going bird, but each one gave that peculiar, jerky, shrill cry of fear uttered when a fox is about.

Then came Christmas, followed by 1897, the 5th and two following days of January finding me at Knepp Castle, Horsham, where, in two days, we got 48 cock pheasants, 39 partridges, 15 snipe, 2 teal, 4 hares,

and 23 rabbits. On one of these days we found a singular covey of partridges, in which all the cocks had pure white horse-shoes. We killed three of them at a drive before the matter was noticed, and then Sir Raymond tried to spare the remainder to ascertain if the peculiarity would be transmitted to their descendants. Likewise, during this visit, Merrik Burrell saw a stoat carrying a big rat on his back at a great pace; this he managed to accomplish by keeping his teeth fixed in the throat of his victim, while by a sharp toss of the head the rat was continually replaced in a portable position.

1897.

The 1st of September found me shooting with Arthur Wagg, at Maresfield, near Uckfield; but, as it rained very hard all day, we came back after getting a few brace. On this day, for the first time in my life, I let my gun off by accident, in the following manner :—

I had forced my way through a thick hedge to try and turn a covey we had seen alight on a grass field on the other side of it. On getting through, I saw the birds running in front of me far out of shot, but going in the right direction, and, as I was on the extreme left of our line, I threw my gun across my left arm, when a barrel exploded. Much surprised, I yet managed to hold the gun, and upon examination I found a large piece of blackthorn broken off from the hedge and sticking exactly in the bend of the elbow; on to this I had placed the gun, and the trigger was touched by "the lawyer" attached to my sleeve, the result being as I have described.

Here also I will bring to the notice of my readers a danger arising from the use of the hammerless gun, which probably they will be aware of, but which up to now I have never seen mentioned. Of course hundreds and hundreds of shooters carry their guns under their arms when no one is in front of them. This is a very pleasant and safe way as long as the arm is not raised; but if for any reason, such as

lighting a pipe with the hand of the arm supporting the gun, the muzzles become elevated and the stock depressed, then the bearer runs a great risk of the gun slipping from its position and falling butt end on to the ground, and I have been witness of one hair-breadth escape from a so caused accidental discharge. Those who have used hammer guns a great deal are very apt to run this risk, for they have probably frequently lifted the elbow that carried the gun, as the hammers, catching against the upper part of the arm, always gave a secure grip; but when the hammers are absent there is nothing to keep the gun in position, and if it slips to the ground and goes off, the barrels will be pointing nearly for certain at the head or shoulder of the gun carrier.

On the 2nd of September, accompanied by Colonel Gyll, I shot with Croxton Johnson on his property at Hailsham, in Sussex; but, instead of raining, it blew a gale, and our score was but just ten brace. On the 3rd, on the same estate, the weather was more

favourable, and with Captain Shiffner and Harry Scarlett we bagged twenty brace.

Then the 7th saw me appearing at Lamington once more, and here it was perhaps the very worst grouse season ever known, as during the whole of the nesting time there had been from ten to twenty degrees of frost every night, which had destroyed nearly all the nests. We only shot a few brace of grouse, and these were mostly old birds.

On the 16th I went on to stay with Major Pearson, at Quarter House, Broughton; and here, too, the grouse were nearly extinct, and he had already given over shooting them. This season was also one of the very worst for salmon fishers—the moderate fishings gave no sport at all, the good ones but little, and the very best were poor in the extreme when compared with previous years. The Spey was especially bad, and the celebrated Gordon Castle water exceptionally so, and no possible comparison could be made between this season and that of 1886, in which year, on the last day of the fishing—15th October—

thirteen rods killed seventy-four fish as under. Truly a wonderful record!

The Railway Arch: The Duke of Richmond—

19, 19, 20, 21, 24, 28, 31, 34 = 8

The Braehead: Colonel Corkran—

7, 19, 19, 20, 21, 21, 21, 23, 24 = 9

Lower Stynie: The Duke of Wellington—

22, 25½ = 2

The Quarry: Lord Leconfield—

15, 15, 17, 19, 19, 20, 30 = 7

Lennox Water: Mr. J. Balfour—

16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 = 6

Eskil: Lord Langford—

16, 18, 18, 20, 22, 40 = 6

Bridge and Bulwark: Colonel Vivian—

15, 16, 17, 20, 21 = 5

Chapel Pool: Colonel Montagu—

18½, 21, 22 = 3

Otter's Cave: Colonel Pearson—

10, 20, 22 = 3

Carried forward . . . 49

	Brought forward . .	49
Dipple:	Lady Caroline Lennox—	
	10, 20, 20, 25	= 4
	Lady Florence Lennox—	
	16, 20½, 24	= 3
Rock and Turn: Mr. Ogle—		
	7, 16, 17, 18, 18½, 19, 20, 20, 20, 26	= 10
The Green Bank: Lord March—		
	8½, 9½, 10, 16, 20, 24, 25, 29	= 8
		74

74 fish, weighing 1686½ lbs., or an average of just under 23 lbs. a fish.

The total take to the rod on this stretch of water in that season, from the removal of the nets on 27th of August to this wonderful last day on the 15th of October, was 819 salmon and 232 grilse, or 1051 fish.

On October 12th, 13th, and 14th I had three nice days of sport with my old friend Joe Carter Wood, at East Tisted Rectory, near Alton, in Hampshire. Though the bag was but 406 head—pheasants and

CARTER WOOD'S LUNCHEON TENT.

partridges—nearly every shot that presented itself was a difficult one, and I have often seen four or five times as much killed in the same time, without getting one-tenth of the fun this shoot gave us. Sir Richard Graham, of Netherby, the Hon. Hugh Duncombe, and Colonel Edgar Larkin made up the party.

Next, on the 23rd October, I had a nice day of 301 pheasants as the guest of Charles Crews at Billingbear Park, Twyford, the other guns being the Hon. H. Hare, William Rhodes, and Emil and Alfred Biedermann; and with this last-named friend, on the 20th November, at Forest Lodge, Three Bridges, seven of us got 520 pheasants and 4 woodcock.

Then came more days at East Tisted and Maresfield, till, on the 11th December, I found myself once again at Carnanton, the guest of Captain G. W. Hunt, who now rents this rare good sporting place from Brydges Willyams. In three days six of us got just under 400 pheasants and 21 woodcock; but here, again, the shooting was all quality, for the covers are "hanging" ones, and the birds were consequently very tall. On

the off-days—which included two on the Gorse Moor, so long attached to Carnanton, and now in the hands of Mr. Michael Williams—I got forty snipe and some ducks; but there was nothing like the usual quantity of "stuff" on the marsh as there was when it belonged to Carnanton—a fact perhaps to be accounted for by the frequency with which it is now shot, and, though the total yield is about the same, the glory of the big bag days has departed, and nothing is now achieved on it to compare with the scores made in old days by Brydges Willyams and his friends, or even by myself in recent times.

On December 1st, 1885, I had 5 wild duck, 22 teal, and 16 snipe; on December 10th, 1886, 6 ducks, 8 teal, 19 snipe; on December 7th, 1887, 1 widgeon, 14 teal, 29 snipe; on the 12th, 1 duck, 1 widgeon, 10 teal, 22 snipe; and on the 14th, 1 widgeon, 1 duck, 12 teal, 12 snipe.

Next, on the 31st December, I had another nice day at Coolhurst, Horsham, with Scrase-Dickens, four of us getting eighty pheasants second time through.

This was followed by some days with Harry Holford, at Rookesbury Park, Wickham; with Arthur Wagg, at Maresfield; and at Dan-y-Park with Louis Bonn.

And now to bring events up to the very latest date, from the 31st of March to the 6th of April, of 1898, I fished for trout at Dan-y-Park, with Captain Robert Sandeman. The Usk was at summer level, the nights frosty, the days bright, and the "Cob" or March Brown never really came out properly, and during the period of my visit we got but 120 trout, weighing 53½ lbs. During my stay I saw two nests of the water ousel, both holding the full complement of four round white eggs, and the hens just commencing to sit. These were the first nests of this harmless bird I had ever seen. I say harmless advisedly, for the belief that it feeds entirely on trout and salmon ova has been proved wholly erroneous —a discovery which, it is to be hoped, may become more widely known, and thus save the lives of many of these confiding, cheery, and pretty little anglers' companions.

My host of Dan-y-Park is blessed with extraordinary quick eyes, educated by long practice for the discovery of anything in the shape of a nest, and chiefly by their aid he has put together a very fine collection of eggs in clutches, to which I was enabled to make a contribution in the shape of a cuckoo's egg, taken under the following circumstances :—

In May, 1894, I was spending a few days at Netherfield with the late Sir Charles Booth, and, a shower coming on while I was in one of the gardens, I took shelter in a potting house, where I found Ricketts, the head gardener, and while watching him at work, a cuckoo flew just over the low roof of the building and dashed directly and without the least faltering into a robin's nest we both knew of in some ivy on a wall about twelve yards from us.

"Lor, sir, did you ever see the like of that!" exclaimed Ricketts. "She had her egg in her mouth."

On hearing this, I dashed forward, cap in hand, to try and "bottle" the cuckoo, and certainly five seconds did not elapse between seeing the bird enter

Dan-y-Park.

the nest and making a rush for her. She was too quick, however, although she struck my cap as she dashed away. On looking into the nest, there, sure enough, was her egg in the midst of the recently hatched robins, one of which had been cast out of the nest on to the gravel path below. We took the egg and put the fledgling back, and it eventually flew off with the others.

And now I am at the end of my amusement. As a "game" for me these pages were commenced; with "game" they have been filled; and it remains for me but to hope they may find my readers "game" to

THE END.

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Who's Who, 1919.

Augustus Grimble, son of the late William Grimble of the Distillery, Albany Street, Regents Park, born in 1840; married in 1880, Allice, eldest daughter of the late Matthew Edward Ward, R.A. Served in the 25th and 41st Regiments. Publications - Deer Stalking, Shooting and Salmon Fishing; Highland Sport; The Deer Forests of Scotland; Leaves from a Game Book; The Salmon Rivers of Scotland; Recreations; all outdoor sports. Address 44, Duke Street, S.W.1.

Whos Who, 1919.

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